

# IMAGI-MOVIES

Spring 1995

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## HARRY- HAUSEN

*AN EFFECTS NAME  
TO CONJURE WITH*

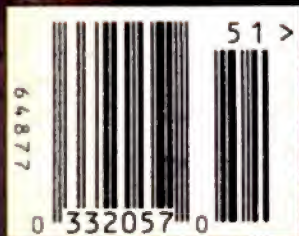
DEMON KNIGHT:  
TALES FROM  
THE CRYPT

VAMPIRELLA,  
CULT COMIC ICON

FULL MOON  
VIDEO ECLIPSED

Ray Harryhausen, the  
stop-motion maestro  
whose art has gone the  
way of the dinosaur

Volume 2 Number 3





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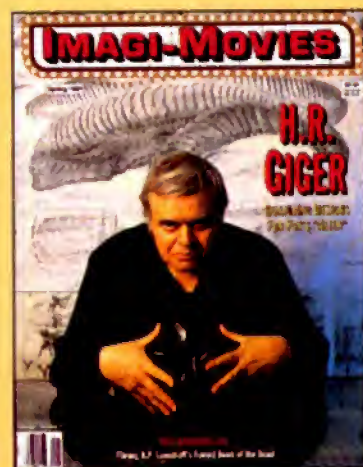
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"The Magazine of Cinematic Imagination"

SPRING 1995

## CINEMAGINATION

If you've glanced at the items to the right, and if you're familiar with every issue of *Imagi-Movies* to date, you might be wondering how we managed to print Part Two of a Ray Harryhausen career profile when we never ran Part One. The answer is that Part One was not in *IM*. Like many of you, I enjoyed the beginning of Ted Newsom's retrospective when it ran in *Cinefantastique* #11:4 (fourteen years ago!), and I eagerly awaited the conclusion, which never came. Now, I'm in a position to bring you the second installment, which traces Harryhausen's work during the 1960s, after *THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* proved his effects magic to be a boxoffice draw. At fifteen pages, this is the most space we've devoted to an article in a single issue, and it still isn't enough to wrap up his remaining career. The concluding chapter, we promise, will arrive before another fourteen years elapse.

On to another topic: although *IM* doesn't report boxoffice grosses (the practice, theoretically of interest only for those in the screen trade to measure how well their industry is faring, has become, perversely, a method by which potential viewers determine whether or not to buy a ticket—as if success were an indicator of quality), nevertheless, in the case of *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, it's hard not to feel vindicated by the record-breaking \$36-million opening. Of course, the gross dropped precipitously the following weekend, but then the film hardly delivered all that it should have. Nonetheless, the strong debut proves that the interest is there on the part of audiences looking for something original and exciting in the genre. Think about it: *FRANKENSTEIN* sank, and the last Stephen King brand name horror film, *NEEDFUL THINGS*, grossed less than half as much—in its entire theatrical run!

The King is dead, and the true future of horror is not Clive Barker but Anne Rice. Let's just hope subsequent films do her work better justice.

Steve Biodrowski



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**Publisher:** Frederick S. Clarke. **Editor:** Steve Biodrowski. **Bureaus:** New York/ Dan Scapperotti, Anthony P. Montesano. Los Angeles/ Michael Beeler. London/ Alan Jones. **Video/** John Thonen. **Animae/** Todd French. **Lasers/** Dennis Fischer. **Contributors:** Dan Cziraky, Douglas Eby, James M. Fallor, Bruce G. Hallenbeck, Mike Lyons, Andy Markowitz, Patricia Moir, Ted Newsom, Randy Palmer, Matthew F. Saunders, Jay Stevenson, Frederick C. Szebin, Jeff Thompson, Diana J. Zemnick. **Editorial Operations Manager:** Elaine Fiedler. **Editorial Production:** Lisa Tomczak-Walkington. **Production Associate:** Ruth Kopala. **Publisher's Assistant:** Lisa Coduto. **Circulation:** Reva Patterson.

**PHOTO CREDITS:** ©1994 Geffen (Francois Duhamel 55T); ©1994 TriStar (David Appleby 55B; Rob McEwan 40BR); ©1994 New Line (Joseph Viles 56); ©1994 Le Studio Canal + (Claudette Barius 57B); ©1994 Paramount (Elliot Marks 57T); Mike Vaughan (58); © Walt Disney (Dean Williams 60); ©1994 Universal (Robert Isenberg 8-9T; Peter Sorel 8, 9, 49T, 52T; Joseph Lederer 54BR); ©1993 Tracy Kahn (33); ©1994 Gramercy (4B); Agency Bo (40BL); ©1993 Franco (11TR, 11BR, 12); ©1993 Castle Rock (Bob Akester 50B); © Touchstone (Joel Fletcher 29; Suzanne Tenner 54T, 54BL); ©1994 Stephen Palty (7, 48); Kim Gottlieb (36); Bob Villard (14); ©1994 Savoy (Jim Townley 37); John Wright (35); ©1981 Palleport (42-45); Videoprints (Larry Tetewsky 16B, 18B, 26T); John Hannah (53); © Aswang (13). **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Hollywood Book and Poster, The Del Valle Archives, R/Greenberg Associates, Tippett Studios. **COVER:** David Voigt

**IMAGI-MOVIES** (ISSN 1069-5095) is published quarterly at 7240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Forest Park, IL 60130. (708) 366-5566. Second class postage pending at Forest Park, IL 60130 & additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to IMAGI-MOVIES, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** Four issues \$18. (Foreign & Canada: Four issues \$21.) Single copies when purchased from publisher: \$8. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 250 W. 55th St., New York, NY 10019. (800) 221-3148. In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT. Phone: (01)980-6167. **Submissions** of artwork and articles are encouraged, but must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Contents copyright ©1995 by Frederick S. Clarke. **IMAGI-MOVIES** (TM) is a proprietary Trademark. **PRINTED IN USA.**



# SINISTER SENTINEL

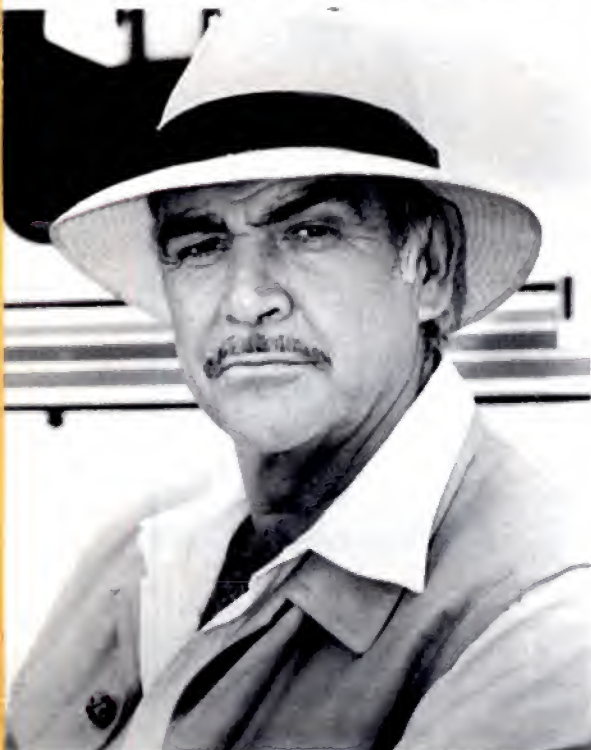
We all know that Hollywood is not the most creative and original of artistic communities. In fact, it's more of a factory that continually recycles ideas and themes that have proven popular in the past. There's nothing absolutely wrong with recycling, of course, as long as one adds a new spin on the material or rethinks and updates it. What's sad, today, however, is the number of ideas that are not merely being recycled but *remade*.

In some cases, remakes can be justified: perhaps an adaptation of a book did not fully capture the source material, or perhaps a film didn't have the budget necessary to realize all its ambitions. But the current spate of remakes, in varying states of production or development, seem inspired by little more than the tremendous box office success of *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA*. With this in mind, we asked members of our staff to take a look at some of the more notable examples and decide whether there is any room to improve upon these genre classics.

## BEDLAM

Martin Scorsese has decided he's going to give horror fans something they've always wanted: a remake of *BEDLAM*. That's right: whether we realize it or not, the storyline of Val Lewton's 1946 costume drama "possesses the stark simplicity of a legend." We know

Sean Connery is set to replace Rex Harrison as the salty sea captain's ghost in *GHOST AND MRS MUIR*.



Chris Columbus plans to write and direct a new version of *THEATRE OF BLOOD*, but without a horror star of Vincent Price's calibre, what's the point?

this now because executive producer Scorsese says it is so.

The original *BEDLAM* was an interesting and offbeat picture, but it failed to approach the sinister heights of Lewton's best genre productions, *I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE* and *CAT PEOPLE*. A 1981 remake of the latter didn't win any fan accolades for its catabolic transfiguration of the original, but then remakes seldom do. It's going to be even more difficult for Scorsese and the current in-name-only incarnation of RKO Pictures (which owns remake rights to all the old RKO titles, although the films themselves belong to Ted Turner), since Boris Karloff's portrayal of Sims, the sadistic head of St. Mary's asylum (the bedlam of the title), will be sorely missed no matter who adopts the role for the remake, which has not yet been cast. John Sayles is writing the screenplay, and Alison MacLean (*THE CRUSH*) is scheduled to direct.

According to RKO executive vice-president Mitch Blumberg, what makes *BEDLAM* worth repeating is the story's "image of a

woman manipulated by powerful men...and righting a wrong, [which] has tremendous appeal to a lot of people today." Blumberg may be right, but for fans of horror—presumably *BEDLAM*'s target audience—it was Karloff's performance that made the original (which also had a female protagonist) so memorable. Unless the new version scores an acting K.O. from the likes of a Jack Nicholson or a Harvey Keitel, it would probably be best to leave this *BEDLAM* unmade.

Randy Palmer

## BELL, BOOK, AND CANDLE

This 1958 color classic, directed by Richard Quine, is a beguiling and magical love story about a family of witches. When Gillian Holroyd (a luscious Kim Novak) casts a spell over Sheperd Henderson (James Stewart), he is mesmerized into believing he loves her. When Gillian finally reveals her use of witchcraft, a mortified Shep seeks a cure, but Gillian's aunt (Elsa Lanchester) works to reunite them, not with sorcery but with the power of

true love.

Miramax (also responsible for a new version of *THE HAUNTING*) is planning a "fresh and modernistic" version. Writer-director John Patrick Shanley (*MOONSTRUCK*) will lead the project with producer Jay Weston. The new version would have several advantages in helping it live up to the original, including the advances in special effects, which could create a magical tour de force. Also, the sexual nature of the Gillian and Shep relationship could be handled less coyly. In the original, you are led to assume they have spent the night together, with barely a hint or inkling—no fade to black, no disrobing, not even a button, just a kiss and—presto!—it's the next morning. No word about casting yet, but here's hoping for Michelle Pfeiffer as Gillian, or the wonderful Virginia Madsen (*CANDYMAN*). Michael Caine is tailor-made for Shep, but if the studio insists on more youthful casting, Mel Gibson has shown a profound and compassionate side in *FOREVER YOUNG*.

Diana J. Zernick

## THE BISHOP'S WIFE

This 1947 black-and-white classic, told with touching grace and honesty, is a deeply moving and sentimental film about a troubled bishop (David Niven) and his disheartened wife (Loretta Young) whose lives are set into magical motion by an angel (Cary Grant) sent down to help raise money for a new church. The film was nominated for five Academy Awards and won for Best Sound.

No news on casting of the proposed remake, but imagine Cary Elwes (*THE PRINCESS BRIDE*) in the David Niven role, or perhaps Kevin Costner, who has demonstrated perfection in stepping into roles created by other actors, such as Elliot Ness in *THE UNTOUCHABLES*. And consider the possibilities of Robert Downey, Jr., as the Guardian Angel, whose adorable presence and comedic talents so enhanced the fanciful *HEART AND SOULS* and *CHANCES ARE*. We're living in a time when "Angel Mania" is sweeping the country, with angel authors, t-shirts, magazines, plus a melange of novelties, so there's no wonder a remake is in the works. Should the modern day version live up to the original, then



THE BISHOP'S WIFE could be an absolute joy that would be embraced by today's audiences.

Diana J. Zernick

**FORBIDDEN PLANET**

This 1956 classic stands as a milestone in SF cinema, a picturesque technical achievement that has, to a certain extent, dated over the years, though without losing all its flourish. Much that was fresh then has been redone and rehashed (most notably in STAR TREK), so now that the Dream Machine finds itself in Regurgitation Mode, is there a point to a remake?

With all due respect: sure. A careful updating wouldn't necessarily mar the story of man's deepest fears, hatreds, inhibitions, and anxieties manifested through alien technology. The original doesn't really take off until Morbius brings the planetary cruiser's captain and doctor into the Krell laboratory. A remake could polish some of the rough edges: drop the mushy stuff with Morbius' mini-skirted daughter, shove Earl Holliman's character through an airlock, and maybe there's hope. But could it improve on the brilliant assault by Morbius' Id Monster on the cruiser and its crew? Recently ripped off in a neat episode of the X-MEN television show, this no-armed, bipedal horror (realized only with classic animation) has yet to be outdone in either the prosthetics revolution of the 1980s or the CGI innovations of today.

Unfortunately, there is probably only one motivation for the remake: fear of trying new material. Tons of unfiled material would be well served by cinematic treatment, but with a remake, much of the work has been done. Still, a remake of FORBIDDEN PLANET isn't too upsetting; it could even reform Hollywood's current idea of SF films (CGI, lots of action, and blow things up real good). Now, if they touched TARANTULA, then there would be a reckoning! Frederick C. Szebin

**THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR**

A turn-of-the-century story of enchanting allure, THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR stands out as what a true classic should be. The black-and-white original brings to life with sheer authenticity the time



The chief virtue of the 1946 BEDLAM was Karloff's performance, so a remake will have heavy shoes to fill, unless it scores a comparable casting coup.

period and mood of this spirited and tender romantic comedy-drama about a lonely but attractive widow (Gene Tierney), who moves into a haunted seaside cottage, inhabited by the ghost of the former owner, a distinguished yet cantankerous English sea captain (Rex Harrison). The fabulous direction of Joseph Mankiewicz and the brilliant score by Bernard Hermann will be hard to top in the proposed remake at 20th Century-Fox.

Sean Connery is expected to take over for Harrison. No director

has been set, but Connery's primary choice is Sydney Pollack. Connery would shine magnificently as the updated Captain Gregg, because of his dashing good looks, sophisticated air, and roguish humor. But what of his leading lady? No one has been attached to the project so far, but my personal choice would be Jane Seymour for obvious reasons. In *McCall's* magazine, she said, "My life should be filled with romance and tradition, fantasy and enchantment." Certainly her roles in SOMEWHERE IN

TIME (1980) and THE HAUNTING PASSION (1983) have proved her abilities in this area.

Diana J. Zernick

**THE HAUNTING**

With his production of THE HAUNTING, based on Shirley Jackson's much-studied novel *The Haunting of Hill House*, Robert Wise created an atmospheric film with nothing more than credible performances from Julie Harris, Russ Tamblyn, Richard Johnson, and Claire Bloom, as well as basic tools of the trade: lighting (or lack thereof), composition, filters, and a careful choice of lenses. Wise's HAUNTING is an internal film; it is Eleanor's private story, her plunge from a disappointing reality into a gothic supernatural existence. By today's standards, it would break from the norm (i.e., not be marketable) to make a ghost story without POLTERGEIST's overlaid effects imagery. Whereas, in the original, the inhuman pounding outside Theo and Eleanor's door remains unseen, would Wes Craven working on Miramax's investment decide—or inherit the decision from the notoriously heavy-handed Weinstein Brothers—to use CGI or prosthetic effects to throw open that door? And would seeing a suitably vile apparition enhance the story's impact, or detract from it?

The look and feel of the original owe much to German Expressionism, a variation of which Wise learned during his days at RKO, working with Orson Welles and Val Lewton. Certain contemporaries (Tim Burton most impressive among them) have used expressionism extensively, and SCHINDLER'S LIST has proven that b&w isn't necessarily death at the box office. A remake could serve the material well by refilming in the style Wise decided was best 32 years ago. But one question remains: what's the point of remaking a film that did it right the first time? Frederick C. Szebin

**PLANET OF THE APES**

Oliver Stone's new APES film is being touted as neither a remake nor a sequel, but rather an original addition to the APES mythos. And, according to the producers, the story will remain more faithful to Pierre Boulle's 1963 novel than the origi-



nal film. While the original certainly took many liberties with the story, it did remain faithful in spirit, if not detail. Central to both versions is the satiric human/ape juxtaposition and the irony of humanity's downfall.

An H.G. Wellsian-type allegory, the story's essential crux is one man's discovery of humanity's fate. Taylor, Charlton Heston's cynical amalgam of the book's Ulysse and Antelle, is the fulcrum upon which this discovery is balanced in the film. Without Taylor's transformation from misanthrope to defender of humanity, the Statue of Liberty scene at film's end would lack much of its poignancy. This conclusion is clearly more visually striking than Boulle's original, understated denouement, and Stone will be hard pressed to top it. For Stone to succeed, he must prism the story's commentary through Ulysse, balancing both versions' intelligence, the novel's integrity and the original's accessibility, while combating the audience's preconceived notions of an APES movie. The original (sequels aside) is a genre classic, and Stone's remake can do the book greater homage. Stone's signature is social commentary, however, and it can be assumed that, despite the novel's futuristic setting, his version will be firmly anchored in the present, privileging the statements the original chose to interweave subtly with the action.

Matthew F. Saunders

## THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT

Of all the potential Hammer Films, THE QUATERMASS XPERIMENT (U.S. title: THE CREEPING UNKNOWN, 1955) seems a curious choice to be remade. The story (of the first man sent into space, who returns to Earth and gradually transforms into a hideous alien being) has been ripped off countless times in everything from FIRST MAN INTO SPACE (1959) to THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN (1978), among many others.

One of the best things about the original films was the stark black-and-white photography, which gave it a documentary look. Val Guest's tight direction kept the suspense at a high level, and James Bernard's pulse-pounding score (his first) turned the screws of tension even tighter. Brian Donlevy made a great



Miramax has the rights to Shirley Jackson's novel, *The Haunting of Hill House*, which Wes Craven is set to write and direct after *A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN*.

Professor Quatermass (although author Nigel Kneale hated him—but he basically disliked all the movies based on his character), and Richard Wordsworth, as the doomed astronaut, created a memorable character with shades of Boris Karloff's Frankenstein monster.

The new version, if there is one, has a \$40 million price tag, and names such as Sean Connery and Anthony Hopkins have been bandied about as candidates to play Quatermass. While it would be nice to have actors of such caliber to play the venerated professor, we don't need another multi-million dollar remake of a movie that was done absolutely correctly the first time. The accent would be on special effects rather than character, which would completely defeat the purpose of Kneale's classic concept.

Bruce G. Hallenbeck

## THEATRE OF BLOOD

Who knows what Chris Columbus was thinking when he signed on to write and direct a new version of this well-loved Vincent Price vehicle? And "vehicle" is the key word. The script, direction, and supporting cast of the original are excellent, but they are all there to support the star at center stage. There may be actors capable of taking over the driver's seat from Price in terms of ability, but at the time the original was made Price was the world's reigning horror

star, and as with any star, he had a persona that had been established through the many parts he had played before, a persona that was recognized by his audience and that imbued the role with more than what was written in the script. Sadly, there is no one today with that kind of established background in the horror genre. Lacking that, the exercise seems somewhat pointless.

Jay Stevenson

## VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED

There's one thing about the original VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED that nearly everyone agrees on: at the time it was made, there had never been anything like it. Released by MGM in 1960, it's the one about a small English village overrun by angelic-looking but malicious golden-haired children who have the ability to will *anyone* to do *anything*. The modestly budgeted black-and-white film (which *Variety* termed "strange and sick," predicting it would sink without a trace), spawned a sequel four years later called CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED, which wasn't nearly as good but which had a great tagline: "Beware the eyes that paralyze!" Now, genre fave John Carpenter is renovating the original.

"They missed a lot of things in the first movie," says Carpenter, referring to the source novel for the original, *The Midwich Cuckoos* by John Wyndham. "There was actual-

ly a saucer that landed in the center of town [for example]." Carpenter's game plan is to update the story to the '90s and relocate the action to America. In addition, the director wants to make the alien-spawned children emblematic of our violence-prone adolescent society. "I would take basically the same story and make the kids representative of, frankly, what all parents are seeing right now, which is all this violence in kids who are killing, and try and hook it up with that a little bit," he states.

With a screenplay by Carpenter and David Himmelstein, there's little doubt that an adaptation of Wyndham's novel would easily make the transition from 1960 to 1995. Modern youth's preoccupation with gangs, guns, and glamour—and the violence that goes along with them—virtually guarantees the story would be more relevant than ever. But would that make the new version as scary as the original? What worked on our fears in 1960 might not work in the same fashion in 1995. Americans have become so acclimated to cultural violence, the remake might seem merely mundane unless it's accompanied by more than a hint of razzle-dazzle special effects. With that in mind, it's interesting to speculate whether VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED '95 can repeat the success of the original. If Carpenter merely relocates the action and updates the time period without adding much spice to the brew, modern audiences may wonder what all the fuss is about. After all, who would want to pay \$7.50 to see a movie about a gang of murderous kids when you can watch the same thing for free on the six o'clock news?

Randy Palmer

And so it goes. Tim Burton is considering THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER as the first film of his new deal at Warner Brothers. Gary Oldman may play opposite Marlon Brando in THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU. New Line Cinema has bought the rights to remake LOST IN SPACE for the big screen. And of course, TriStar will be giving us a multi-million dollar American-made GODZILLA. Oh well, as that obnoxious brat once said in a *Calvin and Hobbes* cartoon, "When I go to a movie, I don't want to be bothered with trying to figure out some new plot." □



The Third Annual

# CINEFANTASTIQUE HALLOWEEN BASH

The parties just keep getting better. After two years of annual schmoozing with fellow free-lance writers on Halloween, it seemed like a good idea to start providing entertainment appropriate for the season. This year, local L.A.-based Goth-rock outfit Astro-vamps blew the roof off Barefoot Bar and Grill in Beverly Hills, entertaining not only writers for *CFQ* and fellow publications *Imagi-Movies* and *Femme Fatales*, but also such industry guests as Reggie Bannister (PHANTASM 1, 2, and 3), Elizabeth Brooks (THE HOWLING), Donald F. Glut (author of *The Dracula Book*), Fred Olen Ray ("If Jim Wynorski was here, he'd have something to say about that DINOSAUR ISLAND article"), and Brinke Stevens. Unfortunately, the restaurant's neighbors didn't get into the spirit of the evening; their complaints about the decibel level cut the show short. Well, there's always next year.



Clockwise from above: 1) Debra Lamb meets Michael Myers. 2) One-name designer Shark proves that the Alice Cooper look is back in style. 3) L.A. correspondent Michael Beeler and friend Karen Wilson clown around. 4) Lamb provides a psychic tarot reading for guest Vicki Caplan. 5) THE HOWLING's Elizabeth Brooks relaxes at the bar. 6) Unidentified party crasher poses as either Marilyn or Madonna—you decide. 7 & 8) Astro-Vamps' singer Daniel Ian and keyboardist Eyajo Joseph mingle with female friends. 9) Host Steve Biodrowski has a drink with PHANTASM's Reggie Bannister.





# DEMON KNIGHT

**TALES FROM THE CRYPT comes to the big screen.**

*By Douglas Eby*

HBO's TALES FROM THE CRYPT goes theatrical with the first of a proposed series of big-screen features, DEMON KNIGHT. Executive produced by the trio of high-powered Hollywood talent behind the successful television series (Robert Zemekis, Walter Hill, and Joel Silver), the film was produced by Gil Adler and directed by Spike Lee's former cinematographer, Ernest Dickerson. The script was by

A cowed demon, one of fourteen different makeups provided by Todd Masters.



the writing team of Mark Bishop, Ethan Reiff, and Cyrus Voris, who also have SLAYER, THE DEVIL'S ASSASSIN in development at August Entertainment. William Sadler (Death in BILL AND TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY) stars. Universal will release the film on January 13.

Of course, filling the big screen requires more money and production values, but the chief difference between DEMON KNIGHT and, say, the original 90-minute HBO pilot, is that the feature will not be an anthology. Says Adler, who worked on the script's full-length story, "What we came up with is really a siege movie that taps into a mythology that is very Judeo-Christian in a way: 'God said, "Let there be light"—well, what was there before the light, and how might whatever was there impact on us today?"

Despite the presence of Kevin Yagher's wise-cracking Crypt Keeper, Adler insists the emphasis is not on camp. "We've always felt that in horror you can't do it cheeky, where you're playing the game of 'aren't-we-clever?'—you have to really go for the gold and make it horrible, make it so that people care about the characters enough so that, when you do something horrific to them, you scare the audience. But also give some relief, and the best way to do that is with humor. Then you can smack them again with another beat of horror."

Like many actors who have appreciated working on TALES, Sadler enjoys his work. "I love this kind of stuff," he says. "It's very fun. And it's weird to be acting with rubber things coming at you and special effects that aren't happening while you're there." He compares this kind of project with another tradition of theatrical entertainment. "This isn't Shakespeare, but Shakespeare dealt with ghosts and supernatural phe-



In a typically campy framing sequence, the Crypt Keeper attends the Hollywood premiere of the film.

nomena and witches, and God knows if he could have made people appear out of nowhere, and blood come out of the wall, he sure as hell would have. He did everything he could to make people believe ghosts could walk at night, that daggers could float in midair, that people got their hands lopped off or their eyes gouged out on stage. It was a bloodbath. Except for the comedies, most of his plays are grisly, horrible. He was using state-of-the-art special effects at the time, and people were eating it up, just the way they are today."

Despite appearing in the HBO pilot, as an out-of-work executioner who turns vigilante, many of the film's genre elements

"My main interest," says Masters of his work, "is not to set the audience up with 'Here comes the effect shot.'"







Despite this sequence, producer Gil Adler insists, the film won't be "cheeky—you have to make it horrible."

are new to the actor: "Here we're dealing with creatures from another dimension and so on. I've never done it before, and I find it interesting as an actor. I approach all projects with the same sort of energy; I don't slough it off and say, 'Oh, it's just horror.' If your name's going to be on it and your face is going to be all over the screen, I don't see how you can do anything else. So I've thrown myself into it." He also appreciates that "it's a smart audience out there. We're playing to the connoisseurs—they know the twists and turns down these dark roads. It's hard to stay one jump ahead of that crowd. But I think that's our job: to please people who've seen everything."

Just as Sadler wants to avoid telegraphing the plot twists to a savvy audience, Todd Masters wants to avoid telegraphing the presence of his work special effects work. "My main interest is to think of the film as a whole," he says, "and draw on a variety of media, and approach it as a filmmaker, not set the audience up with 'Here comes the effects shot.'" He considers himself really fortunate to be able to work with John Van Vliet: "I've always loved his stuff; he and I have to be able to come up some pretty unique routes for a lot of these little problems." As an example, one of his characters "just happens to get his head cut off, and the first thing I said was, 'I'm not going to have this head roll to a stop conveniently on its neck, and have an actor stick his head up through the floor'—who hasn't done that?"

**“God said, ‘And let there be light.’ Well, what was there before the light, and how might whatever was there impact on us today?”**

*—Producer Gil Adler—*

Everyone in the audience would go, 'Oh, another effects shot,' instead of being in the film. As soon as an audience member gets pulled out of the film and starts pulling apart the effects, I immediately cringe. We designed the sequence so the head rolls onto its side, like a real head would, and tied in some optical effects with an animatronic head to a couple of other gags that are consistent but not from the same palette—using all sorts of tricks to make a movie rather than an effect."

With his background as a cinematographer, Ernest Dickerson notes that in terms of lighting design, he pretty much stepped back and let his d.p. handle it, but that "the thing we always agree on is the mood of the scene." Being thoroughly prepared in terms of his vision for the film is important to him as a director. "I think you should go in on the first day of shooting having a good idea of what the final product should be. To me, you get that by sitting down and letting that movie projector play out in your head, and trying to see the film, then commit it to paper," says Dickerson. "And then even if you don't stick to the storyboards, at least it gives you a good framework."

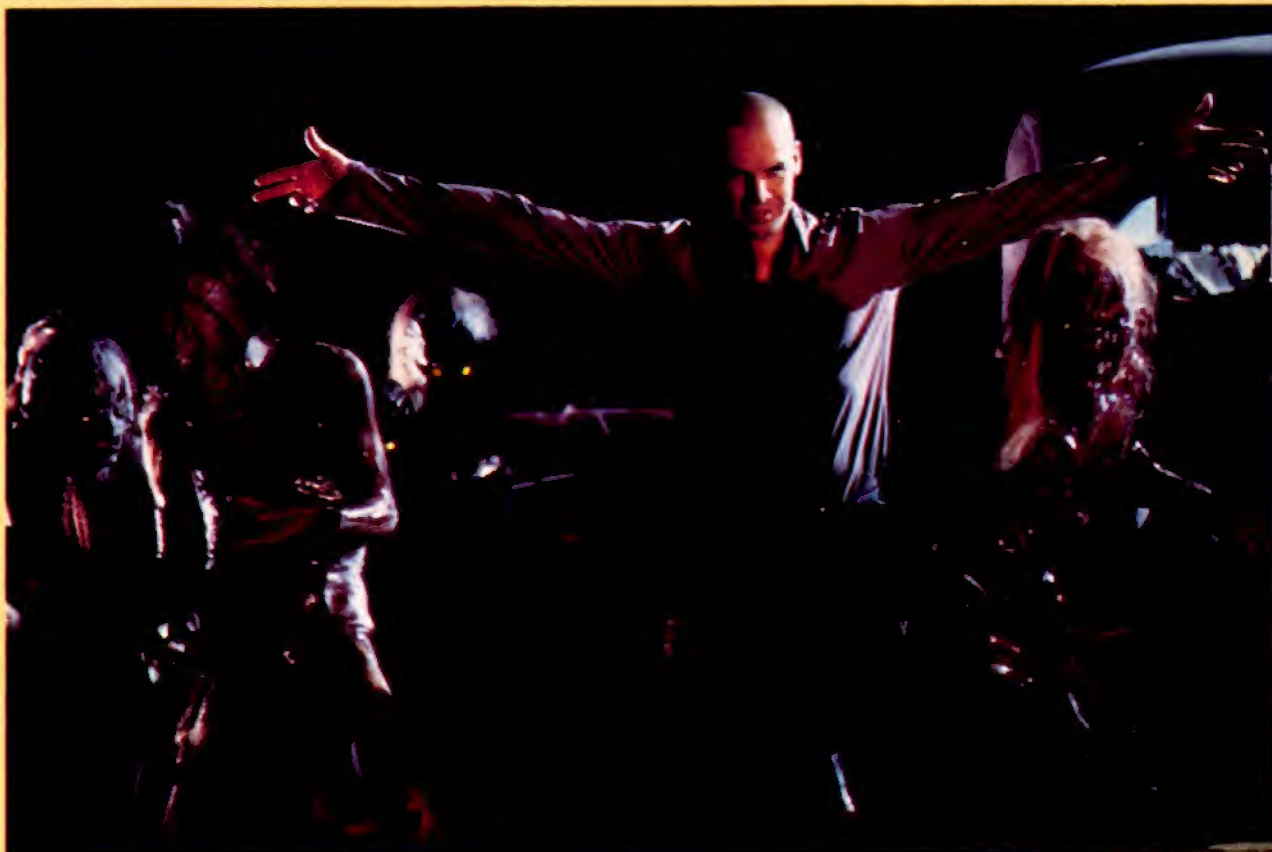
With this kind of film and its tight production schedule, the planning and style



"On this film, we took the effects design to the next level," says Masters, "and the actors are running, dancing, and jumping with no problems."

of working were crucial. "We had to go in knowing exactly what we had to do," Dickerson explains. "You have to commit to how you're going to shoot a scene and what elements you want to emphasize. With the amount of effects work, we really had to know how it was going to integrate. Everybody should know where everybody is going. I don't believe in shooting a film and keeping things secret; I think it's a collaborative process, and you get the best material if everybody knows what everybody else is doing and what's required of all of us." □

Billy Zane's evil character marshals the legions of his demonic army that will invade a small town.







# INVASION OF THE VIDEO VAMPIRES

## Low-budget fangsters **VAMPIRE VIXENS & NOSFERATU DIARIES.**

By Bruce G. Hallenbeck

You would think that independent filmmakers would find it difficult to compete with the multi-million dollar success of *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*, with its special effects and big-name talent. But that doesn't stop them from trying.

Among the low-budget indies throwing their fangs into the arena is Shanachie Entertainment's *VAMPIRE VIXENS FROM VENUS*, written, produced, and directed by Ted Bohus, the high-spirited New Jersey genre fan and filmmaker, who also pulled triple duty on such films as *DEADLY SPAWN* and more recently *THE REGENERATED MAN*.

"It's a sci-fi comedy," Bohus explains. "Basically, aliens turn into ravishing Earth women. They have a draining device that they strap onto their heads. Then, they try to arouse men, which isn't difficult, and the draining device turns the men into husks."

The aliens in question are played by Theresa Lynn (*REVENGE OF THE NERDS II*); J.J. North (*HOT HEADS*); and *Playboy* model Leslie Glass (*MANNEQUIN I and II*). Also appearing is genre scream queen Michelle Bauer (*DINOSAUR ISLAND, THE TOMB, et al.*)

British actor Peter Grimes stars as Detective Mickey Oakenshield, an Inspector Clouseau-type bumbling his way through the murder investigations. Veteran comic actor

Charlie Callas appears as Joe the bartender.

*VAMPIRE VIXENS FROM VENUS* is the first film in a four-picture deal for Bohus with Shanachie Entertainment (an East-coast based company known mainly for releasing CDs of British and Irish folk bands). Budgeted at under \$1-million, it will emphasize T&A over terror, and humor over horror. Essentially a take-off on Tobe Hooper's *LIFEFORCE* (1985), which was based on Colin Wilson's novel *Space Vampires*, the synopsis features some pretty funny bits: for example, when the Inspector reveals one of the deformed, wrinkled husks, someone screams, "Oh my God, it's Rob—I know his husk!"

A slightly more ambitious project is *NOSFERATU DIARIES* (filmed as *THE VAMPIRE'S EMBRACE*), which

sounds as though it owes a lot to Anne Rice. Independently financed by first-time producer Alan Mruvka, it stars Alyssa Milano (who grew up before our eyes on TV's *WHO'S THE BOSS?*), and features Martin Kemp as the vampire. Kemp was the lead guitarist for the British art-rock band Spandau Ballet, and also appeared in *WAXWORK II*. Charlotte Lewis (*THE GOLDEN CHILD*) and Jennifer Tilly (*HIGH SPIRITS*) also have featured roles.

Filmed in Minnesota, the story follows the exploits of a young woman played by Milano. As Mruvka tells it, "She's had a very strict Catholic upbringing, and as she enters her first year of school away from home, she finds herself being stalked by a vampire. He needs her pure blood to stay alive. He has to convince her to fall in love with him, to

choose him, in order to have her."

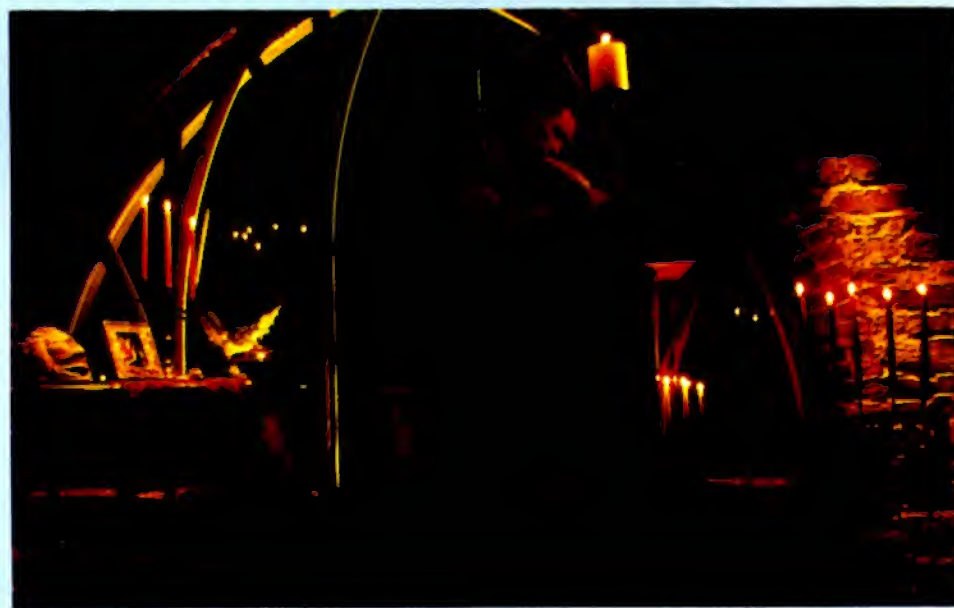
Mruvka admits that *NOSFERATU DIARIES* is a romantic-erotic film à la *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*. Unusual for the genre, it's directed by a woman, Anne Corsaud, who should be very familiar with the vampire myth: among other films, she did much of the editing on *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* (1992). She also edited Francis Ford Coppola's *ONE FROM THE HEART* (1980) and made her directorial debut on an episode of Showtime's *RED SHOE DIARIES*. *NOSFERATU DIARIES* is her first feature as director.

Marilyn Vance, who is producing the film along with Mruvka, has been costume designer on over 40 films, including *PRETTY WOMAN*, *DIE HARD*, and Brian DePalma's *THE UNTOUCHABLES*, for which she received an Oscar nomination. Vance also produced the recent remake of *THE GETAWAY*.

*NOSFERATU DIARIES* was on location for about three and a half weeks in Minnesota in June, 1994, with additional shooting completed in Los Angeles. The producers hope to have a theatrical release.

"Visually, the film is very beautiful," Mruvka emphasizes. "It looks very romantic. There's actually very little blood in the movie. There are very few times you'll ever see fangs in the movie either. It's really a love triangle; it's about

Top left of page: Jennifer Tilly as the vampire Marika. Below: Echoing Anne Rice's characters, who grant interviews or write books, the unnamed lead vampire (played by Martin Kemp of Spandau Ballet) writes in his diary.







Leslie Glas, Kevin Shinnick, Therese Lynn and J.J. North in *VAMPIRE VIXENS FROM OUTER SPACE*.

passion more than anything else. It's about a sexually repressed young girl, who's growing up and at the same time being stalked. The vampire is a very good-looking guy, so that adds to the sexual tension.

"The location that we came to is a hundred-year-old school. It's a stone school that looks like an old castle. It's incredible. The vampire lives in the clock tower. It's going to be visually gorgeous; that's one thing that we really concentrated on. It will be highly stylized."

This being the first production from Mruvka and Vance's company, The Ministry of Film, their hope is that it will be the beginning in a series of vampire films. Although the lead vampire character played by Kemp is never actually named in the script, Mruvka said, "We're leaning toward calling him Nosferatu, in the grand tradition."

And so it goes. The saga of the cinematic vampire continues nearly a hundred years after Bram Stoker penned *Dracula*. And, here we are right back in Nosferatu-land, the land beyond the forest, where the (un)dead travel fast.

Old vampires never die. They just fade away into the sunlight, only to return again, and again, and again, forever satisfying our lusts for terror, romance, eroticism—and, in the case of *VAMPIRE VIXENS*—humor. □

# VIDEO VAMPIRES

## NIGHT OWL

*A guerrilla-style black-and-white study in anarchy and despair.*

By Jeff Thompson

"I got all the time in the world," remarks Jake Collins in *NIGHT OWL*, the latest docu-drama-style film noir by 30-year-old New York filmmaker Jeffrey Arsenault. The boast is accurate—now living a nocturnal life in 1984 New York City, Jake hasn't aged since 1944, when a weird attack turned him into a creature of the night.

Written, co-produced, and directed by Arsenault in 1993, the 16mm black-and-white film was screened to enthusiastic audiences at the AFI's Los Angeles International Film Festival and at the Festival of Fantastic Films in Manchester, England. At the latter event, the film was introduced by Caroline Munro, the glamorous star of such films as *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD* and *STARCRASH*. The dark film, which stars



James Raftery, as the enigmatic night owl Jake, eyes Zohra (Karen Wexler).

James Raftery as the enigmatic Jake and John Leguizamo (*SUPER MARIO BROTHERS*) as Jake's eventual nemesis, Angel, is also peppered with appearances by well-known, trendy New York-area personalities, such as Holly Woodlawn, Michael Musto, and Screamin' Rachael, who sings "I Like to Get

Wild." The film has been picked up for home video release by Midnight Movies.

Filming the low-budget effort took two and a half years. Arsenault conceived the idea while walking with a friend from the East Village section of New York through "Alphabet City" (so called because the streets are named with let-



In a cameo as herself (below), Caroline Munro discusses her Hammer vampire efforts, such as *DRACULA AD 1972* (left, with Christopher Lee).





ters of the alphabet). "We wandered down this really dark street which had a lot of abandoned buildings," the writer-director recalls. "They were completely burned out; they had no windows, just blackness. But we heard the sound of a TV set blaring! I said, 'Where's that coming from?' My friend said, 'It's coming from those abandoned buildings.' I asked, 'How is that possible?' And she said that there were people living in the building called 'squatters,' who take over abandoned buildings and make them their homes, and they tapped into the city's electricity by running a wire from the street lights and hooked up a TV to those wires. I found that fascinating. When I went home, I wrote the idea down on a piece of paper—probably a single sentence—and 'Wouldn't it be interesting if they were vampires?'"

A year later, Arsenault wrote a script which he revised, off and on, for five years before shooting began in December 1989. "I would raise money, shoot for a day, raise some more money, and shoot for another day," he explains. "At that rate, I didn't finish filming until spring of 1992."

Much of NIGHT OWL is ambiguous. Arsenault reveals little about the ghoulish anti-hero during the first half, while documenting mid-1980s East Village life: performance art, murky bars, loud but vacuous dance clubs. An authentic atmosphere was achieved (and the budget was kept down) by shooting on location. "A lot of the film was shot in the East Village," says Arsenault. "The actual interior of Jake's apartment building was shot in the basement of an abandoned funeral home there! In fact, I made James Raftery sleep there at night by himself to guard the camera equipment, while all of us went home to our comfortable beds, just so James could get into the environment more! I let my cat, Spiderbaby, sleep there with him as a companion, because my cat was in the movie and had to get into character as well!"

In its second half, NIGHT OWL sheds a bit more light on-

## MEAN STREETS

**"We wandered down a dark street, with people called squatters in abandoned buildings. I wrote the idea down: 'Wouldn't it be interesting if they were vampires?'"**



Director Jeffrey Arsenault discusses a scene with actor John Leguizamo.

to Jake's condition. Two brief, vague flashbacks to 1944 imply his former life as a mortal, an attack on him, and another character's assertion that Jake will become "one of the living dead." Immediately following the second 1944 interlude, a character in 1984 watches a TV interview with Munro, who articulately and wittily discusses her roles in DRACULA AD 1972 and CAPTAIN KRONOS, VAMPIRE HUNTER ("tongue-in-cheek" but "well-done" she calls the two Hammer horrors). The juxtaposition points out the difference between Jake's brand of vampirism and the caped, romanticized movie stereotype. "I felt the segment was an ironic commentary on what was going on in the film," explains Arsenault, who had met Munro at a science-fiction convention and stayed in touch over the years. "When NIGHT OWL came around, I thought [a scene with Caroline Munro] was a good thing to incorporate into the film. I had a character, Frances, played by Lisa Napoli, who is watching the interview while at the same time contemplating this mysterious 'illness' that has befallen

her friend Jake."

As Jake and Angel separately prowl the streets of New York's lower East Side, Raftery and Leguizamo bring vulgarity, gritty realism, and earthy appeal to their roles. Yet both young actors also shine with an otherworldly incandescence which transcends their unkempt appearances and squalid surroundings. Angel, belying his tough-guy exterior, searches everywhere for his beloved missing sister; Jake, belying his harmless good looks, searches everywhere for women whom he first makes vulnerable through sex before killing them in horrifying, excessive ways. Before disposing of the bodies, Jake wallows in and feasts on the corpses' fresh blood.

The director recalls these sequences were "done very quickly. I don't think there was ever a second take. I personally found the scenes so horrifying to watch on the set and so grueling that I really couldn't bear to do them any more times than absolutely necessary."

This one-take approach ties in with Arsenault's "guerrilla" style of filmmaking. "I never

at any time had any illusions about this film being a 'resume piece,' a glossy little independent feature. From day one I always visualized the story in black-and-white, and everyone who read the script had the same reaction. When Holly Woodlawn came over to rehearse her scene, we were going through her wardrobe, and she held up a piece of jewelry to the light and said, 'Oh, wouldn't this look gorgeous if the film were in black-and-white?' And I said, 'It is!'"

Ultimately Jake and Angel meet in an insoluble conflict, and Jake gets a small taste of the appalling brutality which he has inflicted upon others for decades. By the film's nebulous, ambiguous conclusion, Jake begins to sicken and wither, apparently a victim of his own debauchery, yet his preternatural curse seems to have been passed on to someone else.

Although grotesque and distasteful at times, the film deserves recognition as an honest portrait of malignant violence and lives gone wrong in ways both supernatural and real. "I feel I've achieved leaving [the audience] with a very downbeat, depressed feeling and making them think about what they saw," says Arsenault. "I intentionally left Jake's fate very ambiguous, hoping the audience would figure it out for themselves. During question-and-answer sessions [at festival screenings], no one ever really wanted to know. Whenever anyone asks me, I refuse to answer. I've left it open to audience interpretation. It's something that they have to absorb and think about and probably don't even want to face."

Up next, Arsenault is writing a script called DEATH LINE, about a serial killer who meets his victims over the computer. He is also working on an adaptation of J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, to be set on New York's Lower East Side. "I know *Carmilla* has been done to death, but what I'm doing with it on the Lower East Side has never been done before. My CARMILLA will be very much a contemporary art-horror film." □



# VIDEO VAMPIRES

## ASWANG

*A vampire variation from the Philippines.*

By John Thonen

Few sub-categories of horror have been as fully explored as the vampire film. Every possible variation would seem to have been realized on screen—except perhaps, one: The Aswang (pronounced *aes-wong*) is the central concept (and original title) of Prism Home Video's THE UNEARTHING. The inspiration is far removed from the European origins of most vampire tales—half a globe away.

In 1992, former film students Barry Polterman and Wyre Martin were eager to collaborate on a feature. The only holdup was finding the sort of unique story they wanted for their co-directing debut—until long-time friend Frank Anderson, who was raised in the Philippines, related an island legend that had terrified him as a child. "Frank told us of a Philippine man who claimed he came home one night to find an incredibly long tongue coming through his window and ending up between the legs of his sleeping, pregnant wife," recalls Polterman. "The man grabbed a machete and hacked the tongue in half. There was a scream, and a body fell from the roof. Running outside, the man found his own mother, dying from the wound. She was an Aswang."

The Aswang is a legendary creature in Philippine folklore—a kind of vampire that feeds on the blood of unborn children. A major part of the legend's attraction for the duo was that it had rarely been depicted on film. "It was everything we'd been looking for," says Martin. "Original, bizarre,

shocking, and really over the edge fun. We had our movie."

Polterman and Martin decided to transplant the bloodsucker to their native Wisconsin. They concocted a tale about the wealthy Null family, once Philippine residents, who now live on a remote estate with their Philippine housekeeper. Peter arranges for a pregnant girl to pose as his wife, supposedly to provide an heir for the family fortune. In reality, he is arranging a prenatal smorgasbord for his ailing mother, matriarch of the family of Aswangs.

"We went for a Gothic approach," says Polterman. "Those films always had a family with the money and power to conceal their dark secrets. There's also an incestuous element to most Gothics, and we definitely wanted to maintain that in the family relationships."

Polterman adds, "We did certain things to make the film stand out. In the expository scenes, we played with the sound to create a sense of unreality. Lots of people can't put

One of the Aswang feeds from its victim. The Philippine variant on the vampire legend is thoroughly repulsive, a far cry from the seductive Dracula mold.



One of the victims of the Aswang is left in a cocoon, an example of the kind of imagery one does not usually associate with the vampire sub-genre.

their finger on it, but you sense something is wrong, and it makes you uncomfortable. Visually, we tried to do the same thing with odd combinations of images. Wild animals roaming freely within the Null mansion, for instance, create a weird blend of old world money and primitive lifestyles." They are particularly pleased with the constant shifts in style and demeanor. "There is a sort of condensed history of the horror film within our film. We start with Hammer-styled Gothic and end with EVIL DEAD-styled horror and cover all the bases in between. Again our goal was to keep the viewer off balance, unsure what we might do next."

After the film was completed, the duo surmounted the hurdle where most young filmmakers stumble: distribution. Recalls Martin, "I love telling people that we've sold Bulgarian cable or showing them the German dubbed version. We even sold the Philippines."

Not all was positive in the distribution process, however. Both the lucrative British and Japanese markets were blocked, since those countries have become strict in regards to violence in films. Even in Germany, the distributor had to take the film to court in order to release it uncut. The US situation was less fortunate.

Three scenes are missing from the video. Two depict Aswang eating habits: one shows the creature's tongue darting straight through a victim's neck, and another offers it snaking up under the skin of his arm. "The MPAA knows they've got you when it's a low-budget film," says Martin. "If it had been Schwarzenegger throwing a knife through someone's throat or Stallone having bamboo shoots shoved under his skin, that would have been OK."

The filmmakers are even more incensed by the third cut. While his "wife" is experiencing an odd dream, we see Peter with his head under her night-shirt. The next morning he announces that the child is a girl. "You don't see the Aswang exploring the unborn child," says Martin, "so the comment about her sex makes no sense." Despite hopes an unrated version will be released eventually, Prism has no such current plans.

With their first project successfully behind them, Polterman and Martin are already looking at number two. Their most likely collaboration? Answers Martin, "A gentle tale of unrequited zombie love." □



# KING OF DYNAMATION

## RAY HARRYHAUSEN

**Part Two of our career profile:  
from GULLIVER to GWANGI.**

*By Ted Newsom*

Fourteen years after Ray Harryhausen's last film, *CLASH OF THE TITANS*, the special effects universe has changed several times over: big-budget fantasy is an acceptable risk; miniature monsters are out of fashion in favor of on-set monstrosities; and computer graphics have heralded a (premature) death-knoll for Harryhausen's stop-motion speciality. [see sidebar, page 29] But home video, laser disc, and multi-channel cable TV make Harryhausen's 14 features accessible in a way they never were before, and Harryhausen himself remains healthy and happy at age 74, acknowledged *éminence grise* of the fantasy world. He appears in public far more frequently than during his movie-making days, and received a long-overdue Academy Award in 1993 for his lifetime achievement in special effects. Unfortunately, he has stuck by his promise to retire.

Many of the people interviewed since this article was first written have left us: actors James Franciscus and Gary Merrill, directors Jack Sher, Don Chaffey, and Eugene Lourie, producer Michael Car-



Ray Harryhausen at a recent book signing. Now retired, the 74-year-old effects maestro appears in public far more often than during his working career.

reras. Their memories and their films still live, in present-tense; so will their quotes....

After *THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD*'s successful release in 1958, Harryhausen was at last in a position of having projects come to him, rather than shuffling through offices trying to explain what dimensional animation could do. In Charles Schneer, he had found a patron who understood the potentials and was in a position to get pictures made. The slim budgets of the past—*BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS*, *IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA*, *EARTH VS THE FLYING SAUCERS* and *20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH*—were increased.

The first new project to come their way was an adaptation of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, from Columbia. "Originally, Arthur Ross and I wrote *THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER* for Universal, and it was pretty close to Swift," recalls director Jack Sher, whose writing credits included the classic Western *SHANE*. "Charlie Schneer got ahold of it and had great feelings of trepidation. He said something like, 'Well, this is a classy picture, and I've never done anything like that.' And if





Above: The battle between the ceratosaurus and the triceratops from ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. Left: In same film, a giant sea turtle appears briefly.



elements "fringe," with a left-over blue halo.

The sodium process, developed by Rank in 1956, reduced the steps needed to get a proper matte. The actors, lit by standard lighting, perform before a screen illuminated by sodium-vapor lights, making the background yellow. A special camera with a beam-splitting prismatic lens shoots the image on a regular film stock for the image of the actors and on a special stock that exposes only for yellow. Thus the matte is produced in one step. Unfortunately, the process was the sole domain of Rank, who licensed it exclusively to

Disney studios in the U.S.

"In my opinion, Hollywood had invested far too many years and too much money into the triple-head rear-projector system," says Harryhausen. "Travelling mattes go all the way back to THE LOST WORLD and NOAH'S ARK, but in the 1950s it was still very rare. GULLIVER called for travelling mattes of one sort or another, and the sodium system was much faster. The Rank Laboratory had marvelous facilities. Vic Margutti was the gentleman in charge

Harryhausen's effects helped, but the real selling point of ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. was the bikini-clad image of sex star Raquel Welch.

you look at some of the rest of the shit he'd done..."

Columbia contract player Kerwin Mathews, who had done a fine job as Sinbad for Schneer and Harryhausen, became Lemuel Gulliver. This time, the "Dynamation" scenes were primarily optical juxtapositions of the Very Large and the Really Tiny, with animated models kept to a minimum. Still, it entailed a huge amount of process photography. Harryhausen travelled to England to investigate the alternative to back-projection and blue-screen photography, a system called "yellow backing" or "the sodium-light process," which had been developed by the J. Arthur Rank organization.

With the old triple-headed back-projection system—basically, actors standing in front

of a movie screen—focus and clarity decreased. In the early '50s, a process was invented specifically for color film, known as "blue screen."

An actor stands before a blank blue screen, wearing no blue of the same hue (which would become transparent). A standard camera then films the action. A complex system of mattes and counter-mattes is developed, eliminating the blue in favor of black, then used to print the actor onto a second element (i.e. a background scene). Because of the number of steps necessary to produce the mattes and counter-mattes, and the varying quality of film stock, the precise positions of the filmed objects sometimes change microscopically. If not precisely aligned when composited, the





at the time. With a bi-pack we had an instantaneous matte, and with a base of operations in England, we were much closer to many exotic and seldom-used locations."

Ray penciled drawings for each effects cut, labeling them "SS," "TM," "DY," or "M" for split screen, travelling matte, Dynamation, or miniature. Shooting proceeded at a rapid clip on the old SINBAD locations of Costa Brava, often with set-ups at each end of the beach—one for tiny Lilliput, one for giant Brobdengnag. Kerwin Mathews remembers dashing back and forth between the two. "One day, I got very brave and said to Ray, 'Can't I sit close to the camera and be big, and you can figure out how far back to put somebody in the same shot so that they will be the right size?' He took out his slide rule and figured it out. Of course, the lens made my fat face even fatter."

Although this story sounds contrary to Harryhausen's usual precise planning, some evidence seems to support Mathews' claim: scene numbers 265 through 269 in the estimating script indicate the shots of Lilliputians awarding Gulliver a medal were to have been a travelling matte, but the production photo of the scene reveals it to be a forced perspective. Mathews' face does indeed look a bit fatter because of the wide-angle lens.

"Not to counteract anything Kerwin said, but that was figured out well in advance," Ray counters. "Otherwise, we would have never made the picture. Originally, it was designed as a travelling matte, but costs had to be cut, and it was shot as a

forced perspective set-up."

The film's two animation sequences are first-rate: a charming squirrel and a chilling crocodile. The squirrel drags Gulliver across the grass, drops him into a burrow, then bounces an oversize nut on his head. No real squirrel could be counted upon to do this, so a puppet takes the job; the armature was fitted inside the existing skin by taxidermist Arthur Hayward, who would work often with Harryhausen over the next several years.

This, incidentally, was the only Harryhausen creature shot with a front-light/back-light travelling matte, a process applicable only in stop-motion. It involves lighting a model against a black screen, shooting one frame, then darkening the lights on the model and shooting the plate. The shadowed model then makes its own matte; the footage is step-printed to separate negative and positive components, then recombined. Harryhausen found the process unnecessarily complex, and returned to rear-projection and matting.

Gulliver's fight with the crocodile is brief but thrilling. Wicked sorcerer Makovan (Charles Lloyd Pack) sets a cat-sized croc onto a table. Armed with a miniature sword from a jewelry box and an earring for a shield, little Gulliver parries and thrusts at the hissing reptile. An on-set gag had Mathews' shield pulled away with wires—later seen as the work of the crocodile. Several times, Gulliver's sword whacks the reptilian nose on the camera-side, another Harryhausen detail. Eventually, Gulliver stabs the animal in the chest.

**“H.G. Wells was a favorite,” says Harryhausen of wanting to adapt *First Men in the Moon*. “But rockets were coming pretty close to the moon in reality.”**

A twist on basic rear-projection gives a subliminal “oomph” to the interaction: Harryhausen used miniature props in front of the model. “I put them there to give some contact, make it more believable,” he reluctantly admits. “You wormed it out of me: the Secrets of Dynamation Revealed.”

Despite minimal animation, more than 300 travelling mattes meant the film “was hardly a vacation!” Harryhausen recalls. “You have all sorts of problems: shooting some elements before others, keeping track of them all, combining them later. Travelling mattes run by the foot as well as a flat fee. To eliminate the expense of so many, we used tricks like oversized sets and ‘foreground miniatures’ shot with Kerwin near the camera, which goes back to the silent days.”

Schneer's presence on the set proved an irritant to Sher, who was by nature less easy-going than Nathan Juran had been on SINBAD. “Charlie's the most charming, gracious guy in the world—off the set,” says Sher. “But he's the schmuck of all times to work with—just fucking crazy about saving money. We were planning the scene where this little boat-like object [Glumdalclitch's basket] floats down the river with Gulliver and the girl,

and the giants are throwing rocks at it. We were going up to Boca del Anzo, about four hours away from the Savilla Studios in Madrid. I said, ‘Charlie, look, if they hit that little boat, we're in trouble. Give me eight or nine.’ Now, those little boats probably cost \$1.20 each. So we get up there, and the giants hurl rocks, and one of them barely misses the boat. I turn to the assistant director and say, ‘You'd better get me some more of those boats.’ He says, ‘Charlie only had one made.’ Well, you could've heard me all the way to Madrid! I was so fucking pissed off, I could've killed him! And Harryhausen—that was the only time I saw him mad. So, there I was with one damned boat. I told the actors ‘For God's sake, don't hit it!’ That drives you crazy, because you want them to come as close as they can.”

Back in the Madrid studio, Sher took his revenge. “I said to the actors and crew, ‘I'm going to cure that son of a bitch. When we move to the next set, do the same dialogue we just did. Don't roll sound or film, but make it look like it.’ I do a few takes with the wrong dialogue, and say, ‘Okay, print.’ Charlie comes over and says, ‘Jack, I was talking to Ray, and he doesn't think it sounds right.’ I

The memorable first appearance of the allosaurus in THE VALLEY OF GWANGI: the carnivore devours a cute little dinosaur being chased by rodeo cowboys.



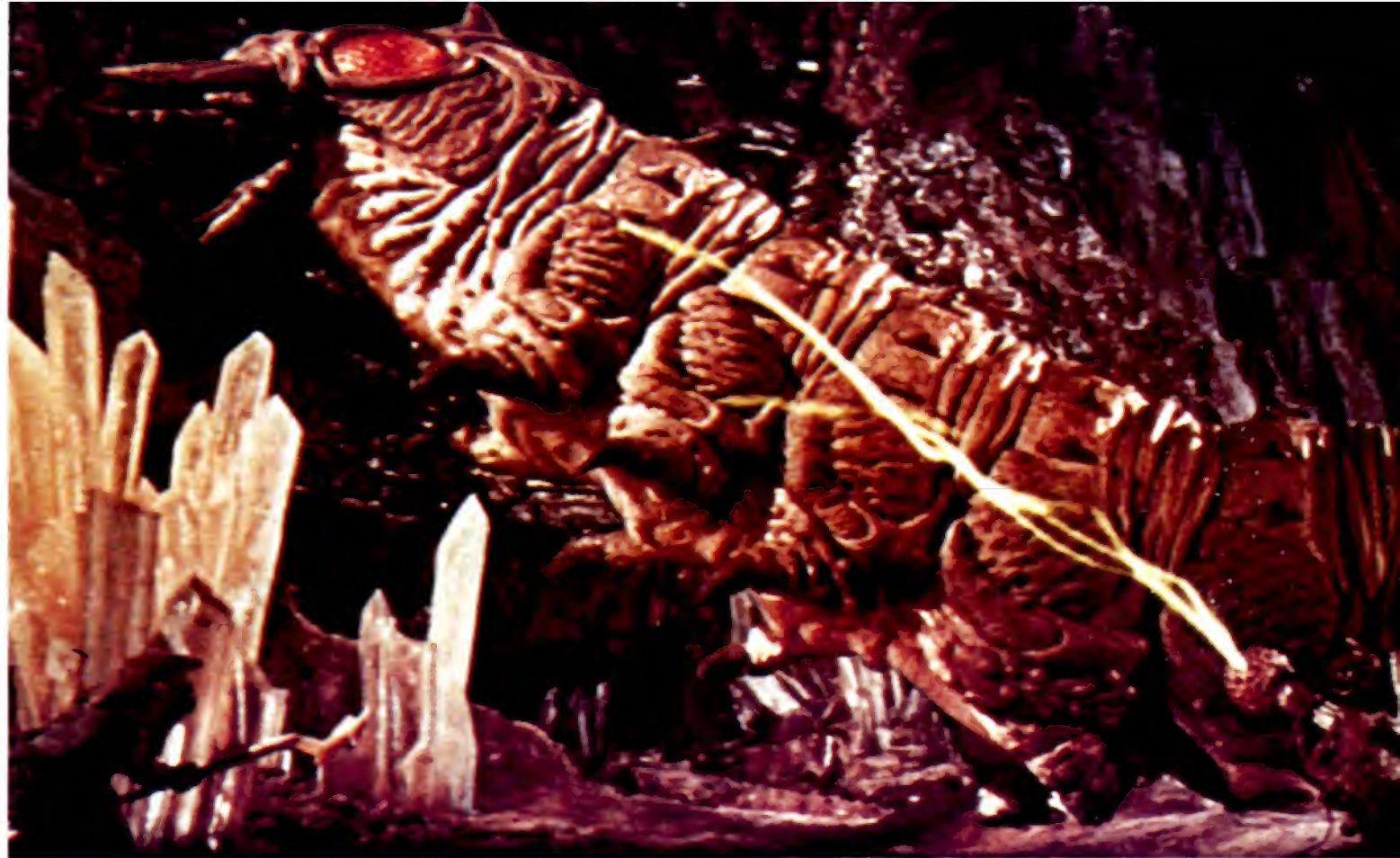


said, 'All right, I'll run another take.' 'Jeez, Jack, you've got five already!' So we do another. Now, the sound crew, the d.p., Wilkie Cooper, and everybody are just dying. Ray comes over—I had this all rehearsed—and tells Charles he doesn't think it's the right dialogue. I check the script and go, 'Oh, my God!' Charlie goes crazy: 'What the hell kind of director are you?! Don't you know one line of dialogue from another?!' I said, 'Well, Jesus. Guess we'll have to shoot it again, huh?' At this point, Ray and everybody else start laughing. Charlie whirls around with, 'You may think this is funny, but we're running a lot of goddamn film!' I said softly, 'Charlie, we weren't running film. I just don't want you hanging around this close.' We didn't see him for two days. But in his defense, he took it pretty well."

The final result is simplified Swift. Mathews does a well-rounded job of Gulliver, and Bernard Herrmann repeats his SINBAD duties as composer. The film got excellent reviews, and did well financially, but not all concerned were satisfied. Sighs Mathews, "I always felt that if they'd spent another two or three weeks they would've had an incredible film, with that marvelous cast." Sher agrees, "Because of budget problems, we cut corners. I would've liked to make it a little more intellectual, more Swiftian. But Charlie wanted to appeal to another audience. The nice thing about the reviews was, they said it would appeal to all ages."

Says Harryhausen, "The English were very pleased, with one small exception. At the end there was a line referring to 'Wopping By the Sea.' Well, Wopping is a real place, but it's on a river, nowhere near the sea. The English had a good laugh at that."

Columbia launched the latest Morningside production with TV ads, billboards, and a float in the annual Thanksgiving Day parade in Los Angeles (as they had with SINBAD). By the time it opened in England (on Nov. 30th, 1960, before royalty) and in America that December, Harryhausen was already developing his next project, an elaboration of a



Above: A mooncalf, one of the few animated creatures in FIRST MEN IN THE MOON. Below: The lunar surface in the film.

novel by Jules Verne.

**I**n the wake of Disney's 1954 success with 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, screenwriter Crane Wilbur (THE MAD MAGICIAN) had adapted Verne's literary sequel *Mysterious Island*. Five years later, Columbia dusted the property off for Schneer as a follow up to SINBAD. Writers Daniel Ullman and John Prebble reworked the story.

"We began by making the island similar to Atlantis, with the destroyed temples which in the film are only seen underwater briefly," recalls Harryhausen. "The island was to have had many prehistoric creatures, which were put aside in favor of Captain Nemo creating an answer to the world's food supply shortage. It's not that we presumed to 'improve' on Jules Verne. We just made certain changes to incorporate Dynamation."

Despite revisions, the script remains close to the 1875 novel. Eschewing science fiction for the most part, Verne's tale is very much updated Defoe (a point underlined in the film by a copy of *Robinson Crusoe* in the sea chest that washes up on the beach). Nemo, having decided to end war by ending hunger, has used "horticultural physics" to create giant food. This explains the crab, the bees, and the prop oysters,



but not the prehistoric animals left over from earlier drafts. A giant shelled mollusk might be a Nemo experiment, but the phororhacos cannot. It is a brilliant recreation of the prehistoric fowl, with striking red feathers and a ludicrous gait; however, it is anachronistic on this island filled with giant but contemporary animals. Fortunately, most viewers assume it is an overgrown chicken.

The sodium process photography is superb. During the balloon sequence that brings the characters to the island, the mattes are so precise that each wind-swept hair on the actors' heads is sharp against the background plate. Blue-screen specialists today would be hard-pressed to get results this crisp. In addition, the lighting of the miniature balloon matches well to the plates.

When it floats through a cloud cover, a red-orange tinge appears on the balloon as the sun (on the background plate) shines through.

"We used quite a few matte paintings," Ray says, "to give a certain feel to the island. Some of the paintings worked; some didn't work as well." The first painting seen is a nice combination of the Spanish beach, jungle glass painting, and flying gulls matted in, held just long enough to establish the idea. Other paintings, held longer because of action within the scene, do not fare as well. One that is unaccountably bad is the long shot of the elevated cave. A full-size mock-up of the cliff wall about 50 feet high was erected on the Costa Brava beach, but was hardly used. Instead, in the various scenes of approaching and





bined with scenes of the beach to give a looming effect, shot at 96 f.p.s. to slow down the smoke rising from the crater.

"The crab was real, or at least was at one time," says Ray. "We bought the largest one we could find at Harrod's in London, then killed and dismembered it to insert the armature. Had we boiled it, of course, the color we wanted would've been lost." A large prop claw appeared in the live-action gags, raising Neb (Dan Jackson) into the air. Jackson was doubled by an animated human puppet in the long shots, and a live crab was filmed in close-up for shots of its moving mandibles.

The model bee is nicely detailed, with operating mouthparts and translucent wings that, properly, move only at the point they join the abdomen, in a fast five-frame cycle. Without anthropomorphizing, Ray gives it character with tentative, jerky movements. The shots of three bees in their hive was accomplished with split screen; there was really only one model. To show the bee sealing Michael Callan and Beth Rogan into a section of honeycomb, Ray worked backward, starting with a sealed opening and removing bits of paraffin as the action progressed. Printed in reverse, the footage was then combined with a sodium shot of the actors in a full-size honeycomb set.

We first see the phororhacos as it leaps over the camera into frame. A cut-out "monster stick" came into play in the hills above Madrid as the off-screen bird's shadow crosses the frightened Spilett. An animated double for Herbert per-



leaving the cave, the performers acted before the yellow-backing screen and were optically imposed on a rather dimensionless painting. The smallness of the figures in extreme long shot made for difficult compositing, and most of these scenes have noticeable fringing. One painting that succeeds well is of a vine-covered log bridge across a deep chasm. A cheerful copy of the chasm in KING KONG, this set-up adds a twist with an optical water effect below, a swirling mist that gives the impression of a rushing torrent, even though no real water was involved. The Shepperton Studios model shop later duplicated these paintings as miniatures to be destroyed by the volcano's eruption. A wide shot of the volcano—a six-foot miniature—was optically com-

Top: The wonderfully reptilian Hydra of JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS had seven heads and two tails. Above: Harryhausen had wanted to film winged demons since an aborted 1954 science-fiction film, to have been titled THE ELEMENTALS; he finally got his chance with JASON's harpies. Below: Frame blow-ups from the film's climactic skeleton fight, which multiplies times seven the justifiably famous skeleton duel from THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD.





forms most of the action atop the big bird, aided by a white-feathered mock-up that resembled a giant chicken bronco.

The miniature Atlantis is reduced to a throw-away gag. Optically slowed bubbles rising from the divers' seashell helmets are far better than a similar effect in *IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA*. The giant mollusk which runs afoul of the divers is introduced with a marvelous shot: first the shell-headed submariners walk by a dark crevice; the camera holds on the darkness, then zooms in, followed by an imperceptible dissolve to a miniature as the cephalopod opens its giant watery-red eye. The fight with the mollusk entailed slow movements of the model, substitution of animated humans, and the underwater photography by Egil Woxhoft.

The *Nautilus* model, about ten feet in length, echoes the design of the one in Disney's *20,000 LEAGUES*, with its jagged beam for ramming ships and portholes like staring eyes, but overall appears more functional, less ornately Victorian than Disney's. "There are a lot of drawings and engravings in the illustrated versions of *Mysterious Island* and *20,000 Leagues*," Ray explains. "I'm sure Disney took those into account just as we did. When you're dealing with Victorian submarines, you can't get too far away from that." The interiors—featuring ornately fashioned living quarters and a stylized engine room with blinking lights and moving bellows—contrast nicely with the silver exterior. It's a shame to destroy the sub in the crumbling grotto without seeing it in action at sea.

The cost of hiring James Mason to reprise Nemo was out of the question. Less expensive Herbert Lom, who had been in Schneer's *I AIM AT THE STARS*, played the enigmatic captain with understated aloofness. Michael Craig, a former Rank contract player, gives a good imitation of an American as Capt. Harding. Australian Percy Herbert gives a peculiar stab at a rebel dialect. Blacklisted American Cy Enfield was probably one of

**“I'd always had a fascination for the Colossus of Rhodes, standing astride the harbor. This led to the concept of Talos, a bronze man who menaces the hero, Jason.”**



An image that inspired a generation of young fans to enter the effects field: Talos, the walking giant statue from *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*.

the best directors ever to work with Schneer and Harryhausen. Perversely, *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND*, with a budget far lower than his later films like *DE SADE* and *ZULU DAWN*, is far superior.

The actors got a kick out of battling invisible monsters. Gary Merrill recalls, "We're out on the Costa Brava beach, poking at nothing, and all the tourists thought we were a bunch of idiots. They asked me, 'What the hell are they doing over there?' 'Hell, I don't know!' Then a year later we'd see the big crab there." Back in England for the effects, Merrill observed Ray at work. "The patience! I was just awe-struck. I said, 'Jesus, I'm exhausted just watching you, Ray.'"

Stock footage in *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND* is mostly unobtrusive. Shots from *TAP ROOTS* blend in nicely with an exterior at Shepperton, giving a Civil War feel without expense. Lava from Paramount's *FAIR WIND TO JAVA* spices up the fiery climax. One shot stands out as not right: a cut of an actual volcano eruption (real life is not as interesting as make-believe). Another sav-

ings was reuse of ships and falling sailors from *GULLIVER*.

The story moves along quickly, though not always smoothly. The striking visual scenes with the animated creatures do indeed feel added to the story, rather than an inherent part of it. The film was nowhere near the success of *SINBAD* or even *GULLIVER* when released in the U.S. in August 1961 and in the U.K. the following year. To regain some of their boxoffice luster,

Schneer and Harryhausen decided to return to myths and monsters. But rather than another Arabian adventure, their next collaboration would spring from Ray's long-time study of classic mythology.

**I**'d always had a fascination for the Colossus of Rhodes," Ray says. "No one really knows what it looked like. Some of the illustrations of it have this mammoth statue standing astride the harbor of Rhodes. And years and years ago, I saw a silent film where an enormous clay statue fell down on someone. And there is a Japanese film in which someone turns his head and gives a certain type of look. All these things came together with the concept of Talos, a bronze man who menaces the hero Jason. I thought the quest for the Golden Fleece held tremendous potential for a Dynamation film."

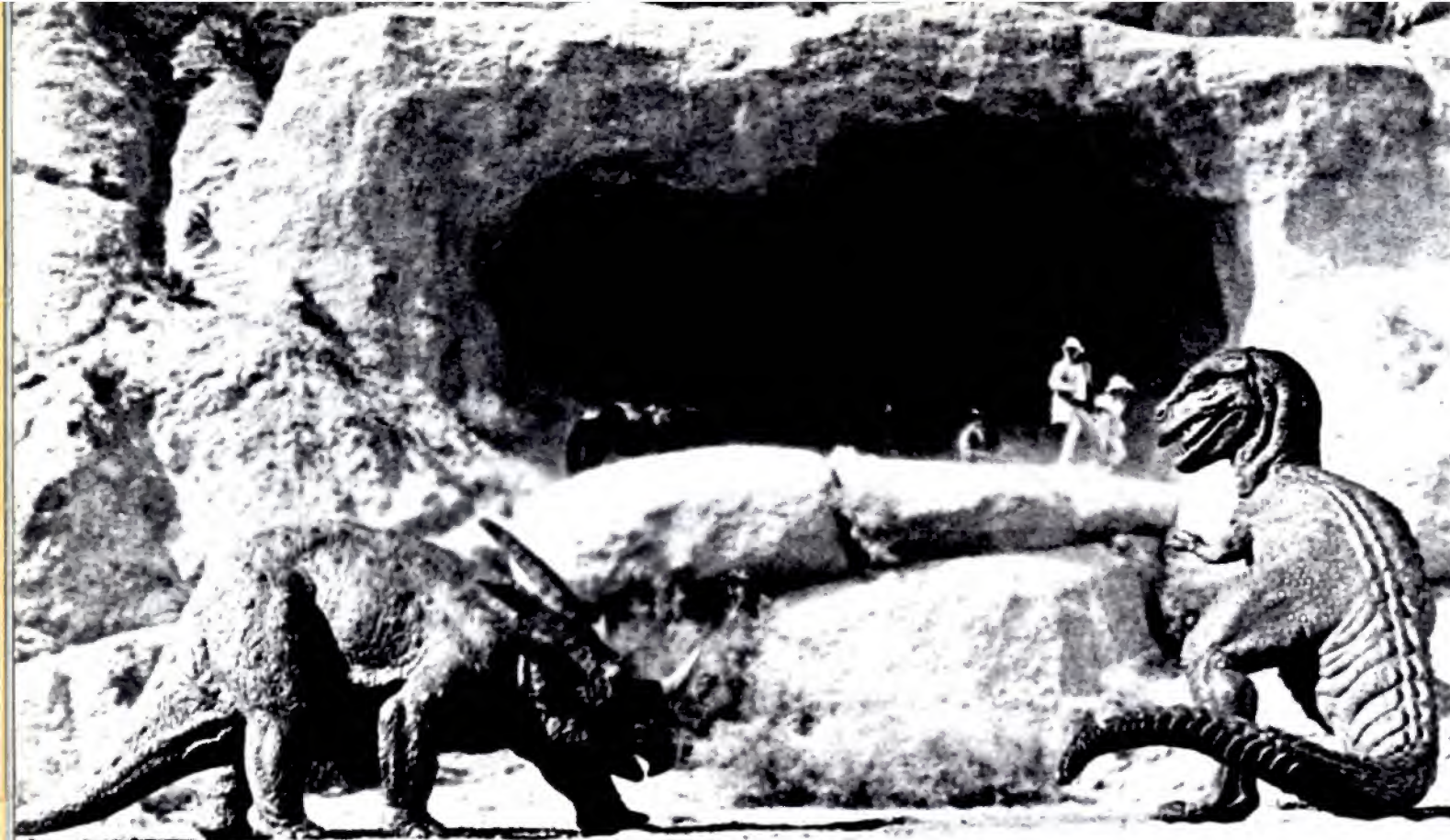
Ray had wanted to do winged demons since the aborted 1954 sci-fi project, *THE ELEMENTALS*; these became the Harpies. The multi-headed Hydra from the Hercules myth became a dragon guarding the Golden Fleece. Medea would lead Jason past the three-headed Cerebus, into a Dante-Dore scene of Hell. The children of the Hydra's teeth would rise as skeletons, the *SINBAD* scene times seven.

Preparation began on *JASON AND THE GOLDEN FLEECE*. Don Chaffey, like *BEAST*'s Eugene Lourie and

Poseidon's appearance in *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS* required only an actor in a fishtail, because Harryhausen prefers not to animate human figures.







Although the story was greatly rewritten, Harryhausen closely followed his late mentor Willis O'Brien's storyboards for the cowboys' capture of Gwangi.



SINBAD's Nathan Juran, had come to directing via art direction, and he appreciated Ray's method of pre-production sketches. But he reacted to Charles Schneer in the same manner as Jack Sher.

Says Chaffey, "I don't understand it. Socially, Charles is one of the most pleasant men you've ever met, perfectly decent. Then you work with him! I told Ray one day, 'He turns into a worse fucking monster than you've ever invented!'"

Jan Reed turned in a first draft, which Chaffey termed "appalling, absolutely unworkable. Charles Schneer had the good sense to bring in Beverly Cross, who wrote some good dialogue." Sequences vanished for budget reasons: Cerebus, and the dual monsters Scylla and Charybdis. Says Cross, "Since I knew the stories, I corrected some of the more flagrant errors. Ray was very positive about the effects he wanted to do. It was a question of how we would string them together in the most lucid way. We would work in our separate corners; then when I'd done the script and he'd done his sketches, we'd get together and compromise."

For location shooting, Greician ruins were too popular

with tourists, too inaccessible, or too decayed. Italian ruins, though anachronistic, were close enough in style to substitute. The village of Palinuro served as an operations base, where the 100-person cast and crew nearly outnumbered the population.

Cross, who got his first taste of location rewriting on LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, went with the JASON unit. According to Chaffey, "Beverly was there a lot, and we got a lot out of him. He wrote some wonderful lines, like when Honor Blackman says to Niall McGinnis — Hera and Zeus— 'You realize that when people cease to believe in us, we will cease to exist,' which is quite deep when you think about it."

To play Jason and Medea, Columbia assigned two rather minor stars in their firmament, Todd Armstrong and Nancy Kovak. Armstrong had little experience to prepare him for a major role: a part in WALK ON THE WILD SIDE and a Screen Gems series, MANHUNT. Kovak's credits were more solid (e.g. STRANGERS WHEN WE MEET), but the role required little depth.

"Nancy Kovak tried; I'll say that much for her," Chaffey says. "But that other asshole, I had no time for at all. When we rehearsed the skeleton fight, Todd Armstrong said, weeping, 'Mr. Chaffey, this sword's too heavy for my arm!' I said, with some asperity, 'Mr. Armstrong, you are six-foot, four inches—I won't say manhood—six-foot, four inches of American shithood!'"

The character of Hercules steals his few scenes. "We wanted to get away from the beefcake," says Harryhausen. "Once you establish Hercules as Steve Reeves, that doesn't mean every Hercules has to be in that image." Agrees Chaffey, "Nigel Green was super as our over-the-hill Hercules. Just a drunken braggart with a ratty old lion skin, all he has left!" The rest of the characters pale in comparison, but Lawrence Naismith is sturdy as Argus, Gary Raymond sleazy as the Acastus, and Douglas Wilmer regally hammy as Pelias.

Much of the sea action was





**“If O’Brien had done GWANGI in 1942, it would have been magnificent, like KING KONG, with a nicer mood [than ours]. It’s grand to go first class.”**

filmed first, not without incident. Laughs Harryhausen, “The TV show SIR FRANCIS DRAKE was shooting second-unit stuff in the area. We were waiting for the wretched *Argo* to come around these rocks, and *The Golden Hind* came around instead! Charles got furious.” (According to a press release, Schneer yelled, “Get out of here! You’re in the wrong century!”)

Press releases also made much of the *Argo*, a 92-foot ship with two dozen working oars—though three Mercedes-Benz diesel engines below deck supplied the real power. Supposedly built at the Anzio shipyards at a cost of \$250,000, actual expense was much lower, thanks to Schneer’s business acumen. Depending on which story one believes, Schneer either had rented it from the CLEOPATRA unit shooting in Rome at the time, or eventually sold it to them, cleverly amortizing the major expense of JASON.

Shooting continued on Shepperton Studio’s large blue-screen stage—the sodium process being unavailable for the length of time needed. Full-size sections of the *Argo* prow and rail, miniature *Argos* in two-foot and two-inch versions, hunks of Hydra tail, and the clashing rocks were built by studio craftsmen. Ray again farmed out some model work to paleontologist Arthur Hayward from London’s Museum of Natural History, and another studio sculptor. The refined elaborations on Harryhausen’s bag of tricks are astounding.

The twin harpies hung suspended before the rear screen by a series of wires which moved in all four compass points as well as up and down. The models are undetailed but seldom seen in close-up. A wire gag on-set whipped off Patrick Troughton’s belt, was

later combined with movements of the harpies; miniature “ground” lets the creatures cast shadows. As with all animated creations, the strobe effect calls attention to their unreality. “I don’t think doing a dissolve with the wings or something like that would have sold one more ticket,” Harryhausen shrugs.

The Talos sequence might have been filmed quicker using a man in a bronzed suit. “But I don’t think that would have achieved the effect we wanted,” Harryhausen counters. “The stiff, mechanical movements I don’t think would have come across.” Talos, rubber coated with a bronze finish, had large-scale pieces for closer shots—a section of sword, a hand and arm, and a

**Inevitably, Gwangi escapes from the rodeo, attacks an oversized and not very convincing circus elephant, and dies inside a burning cathedral.**





foot and ankle to match the life-size one in the plates.

The segment begins in the Valley of the Titans, a composite of Italian scenery and miniature tombs topped by statues so gargantuan that in the long shots, the figures of Hercules and Hylas barely register. The low-angle shot of Hercules and Talos is justifiably memorable. Statues aren't supposed to move—especially statues *that* big!

The oversize hand and arm come into play as the bronze giant slaps the beach, pulling some hapless flattened Argonauts toward him. Talos straddles the harbor—a visual reference to the Colossus of Rhodes—then reaches down and lifts a minute copy of the ship by its prow. (In fact, Talos never grabs the prow; the effect is implied with montage.) An oversize sword swoops across the beach at the Argonauts. This sword, the section of hand and the foot are not in precise proportions to the miniature statue, but it is the overall effect that matters. The sequence is marred by an increase in grain, due to degeneration of the components during the blue-screen work, among other factors. Few might notice consciously; but unconsciously it signals “monster effect coming up.”

To shoot the live-action for the skeleton sword fight, Chaf-

On location for MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, Harryhausen tries on the giant crab claw for size.

**“MYSTERIOUS ISLAND was to have had prehistoric creatures. It's not that we presumed to improve on Jules Verne; we had to incorporate Dynamation.”**



A giant bee honeycombs in the young ingenues of MYSTERIOUS ISLAND.

fey, Harryhausen and stunt coordinator Fernando Poggi choreographed stuntmen dressed in white track suits with numbers one through seven. The animation, which took four and a half months, features SINBAD's skeleton, repainted to match his bony friends. As a technical *tour de force* it is unsurpassed; it is also a rousing good fight scene. But like the SINBAD battle, it is bizarre, not horrific. Obviously the U.K. censor thought differently: the shot of skeletons shrieking toward the camera was clipped for British release. Another minor cut follows a shot of Jason lopping off a skeleton's head: missing is the headless soldier clambering on all fours, feeling for its missing skull. As in the Cyclops' barbecue scene in SINBAD, one can almost sense of touch of Laurel and Hardy in this grotesque slapstick.

A flub or two occur. In one frame, a surface gauge pop into view, a wire-and-metal marker used to track movement. Considering the sequence, it's astonishing it happened only once. The scene

gave Ray his most quoted statistic: 13 or 14 frames per day, moving seven figures, each with many joints, in sync with several humans in the background.

“It all depends on several factors: complexity of movement, number of figures, how fast or slow a movement has to be,” explains Harryhausen. “The skeleton fight took quite some time, but on other things one can do perhaps 25 feet of animation a day. It is not so much the animation, but the set-ups, matching lighting, getting everything ready. Animation is fairly straightforward in comparison.”

The clashing rocks segment has come under fire by buffs. When the cliffs bordering the channel drop debris into the sea below, the splashes betray their true size, water (like fire) being impossible to “miniaturize.” And the sea god is clearly a man in a fishtail. Why not animate the scene, or superimpose full-size splashes, *a la* IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA? The first answer is obvious: Harryhausen never animates a hu-

man if he can help it. As for the second, Harryhausen retorts, “Critics seem to forget we are dealing basically with an unreal subject matter, particularly the more fantastic aspects of legend. We are really striving for a surrealistic, dreamlike quality, not a synthetic duplication of reality, as might be necessary in a matte shot of, say New York City. To me, the high speed, exaggerated splashes gave this dreamlike quality we were after.”

The Hydra boasted seven heads with tongues and eyes, plus an animated human in the grip of one of its two scaly tails. Aided by multiple hisses on the soundtrack, it is a reptilian nightmare. Alas, the Golden Fleece seems hardly worth the trouble the Hydra goes through to protect it, its magical aspects undone by unmagical acting. After Jason slays the Hydra (Armstrong drops his own sword imperceptibly; Harryhausen substitutes a model sword for the *coup de grace*), one of Aertes' bowmen shoots Medea. Jason grieves for a second, then lays the Fleece over her. She returns to life, hugs Jason, and off they trot, as if nothing extraordinary had happened. “I grant you the acting had a lot to be desired,” Harryhausen admits, “but we are dealing with a world where so-called miracles are relatively commonplace.”

Bernard Herrmann again composed and conducted, with heroic leit-motifs for Jason, a Stravinsky-esque theme for Talos, muted horns and xylophone for Phineas and his Harpies, and a full-blown orchestration for the skeleton scene. Alas, it was to be his last score for Harryhausen.

Eventually titled JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, the film moves with a stately gait, fitting its epic scope, yet has moments of great action and power. Photography and art direction get high marks, modified by unhappy graininess and blue-screen halos during process shots. The supporting cast is excellent; the leads run the emotional gamut from A to B. For a film that cost only 430,000 pounds (roughly \$1.2 million at the time), it looks fantastic. Its release in Britain and





Two shots of the animated giant crab from MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, an addition to the film which does not appear in Jules Verne's novel.

Europe played to turn-away crowds, and it was highly publicized in the US. "Yet Ray's told me that he heard it made no money," says Chaffey, "which I find astonishing."

Why would an inexpensive picture apparently do poorly in America? An abundance of similar costume pictures, probably. The stills make the film look like a Steve Reeves vehicle; the flood of cheap Italian-made Maciste, Samson, and Goliath pictures had begun some years before. So for their next effort, Schneer and Harryhausen decided to move toward the "future," albeit a future only when seen from a Victorian standpoint.

**H**G. Wells always was a favorite," says Ray Harryhausen of his interest in *First Men in the Moon*. "And of course, George Pal did a wonderful job on *THE TIME MACHINE*, so Wells' name had a bit of drawing power. Charles and I talked about it, but it never quite worked out. Rockets were coming pretty close to the Moon in reality, and to do a Victorian era story might defeat our purposes in view of the real thing."

Based on Ray's pre-production sketches, Jan Read adapted Wells' fantasy, but the project languished until science-fiction scripter Nigel Kneale created a clever twist.

Responsible for the thrilling QUATERMASS serials on the BBC (later made into films by Hammer), Kneale was also a Wells devotee, though he doesn't consider the script among his best. "It was just a job," he says. "I knew Ray in London. Like the Hammer QUATERMASS films, it wasn't the way I would've done it, though it was all right."

Kneale's contribution, a prologue and epilogue with a current moon mission discovering an old Union Jack on the surface, "was the only way to do it," explains Kneale, "because at the time, men would be landing on the moon soon, so the spell would be broken when you discover no Selenites living there in reality. I put the end plot twist in to account for what obviously would not be found on the moon when we got there. I was pinching from Mr. Wells himself [as in *War of the Worlds*, the aliens are destroyed by terrestrial disease], which I thought was fair."

Columbia and Schneer pressed Harryhausen to shoot in Panavision. "I argued against it, knowing there were going to be complications with our techniques, but Charles insisted. He reminded me I'd resisted color for so long. How could I refuse?"

"We had a special lens made up by Panavision, and had the projector overhauled so we could project the Panavision image with Dynamation, but it didn't work out. It could

have been made to work, had we several months and thousands of dollars to spend on research, but we had neither. Anyhow, somebody once said the only thing the widescreen process is good for is shooting the Last Supper. Everything must be designed horizontally. But you get to the point where you have to pacify the people who put up the money."

Though anamorphic lenses and projection systems had improved since Nassour Studios shot *BEAST FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN* in 1958, problems with back projection remained. Tests revealed a severe "fall off" of light and definition on the sides of the projected image, and fluctuating

focus in the center. The sodium vapor process was also out of the question. "You had one big problem with that, because the widest angle lens you could use is a 75mm because of the mechanism inside the camera. You couldn't use an extreme wide-angle lens like a Panavision lens with the sodium process. If you wanted very small people on screen, you'd have to go outside the studio door and build an extension tunnel in order to get the camera far enough away to get the right relationship with people sizes. So we went back to blue-backing, where we could use 25mm or even

MYSTERIOUS ISLAND featured many new elements. "We began by making the island similar to Atlantis, with the destroyed temples, seen briefly."







Two more oversized animals from MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, a phororhacos and a mollusk, results of Captain Nemo's attempt to increase the world's food supply.

18mm lenses."

Harryhausen was never able to return to the sodium vapor process of compositing, even though it was in many ways superior to blue-screen. "The little beam-splitting prism that went behind the lens of the sodium vapor camera deteriorated to such an extent that [Rank] could not replace it. Disney had a franchise on it in Hollywood, but they modified it. You'd have thought Rank (or their successors) would have contacted Disney and said, 'What have you done with our process—and why can't we use what you've got?' It's remarkable that the Rank Organization felt it was simply too much trouble. Accountants probably proved it wasn't financially viable, so they dropped the whole thing. It's a problem with economics winning out."

Thus the effects were done with blue screen and travelling mattes. As with GULLIVER, animation was kept to a minimum. Only four major animated creatures appear: two learned Selenites, the bulb-headed Grand Lunar, and a giant caterpillar-like creature.

"That was probably the most difficult to animate in the film," says Harryhausen, "because of all the little segments along the bottom, the legs. On the other hand, there are not that many compared to, say, a real caterpillar. It's the effect that counts in the end."

Harryhausen worked again with Arthur Hayward on the models, and with Les Bowie and his crew on the miniature

landscapes and moon interiors. Studio craftsmen molded Selenite costumes for pint-sized actors. "I've never been in favor of this," Harryhausen says, "but to animate Selenites crawling over the sphere would've taken an age! You try to budget your time, not to take more than three or four days for a single cut; otherwise, you drop behind schedule. You've got to be practical. I think we had 20 or 30 suits made, and put children inside them for size."

The suits boast detailed, fly-like features and jutting tails, but the juvenile performers make only half-hearted attempts at bug-like movements. To expand the number of Selenites, Harryhausen occasionally did split screen work, with the full costumed cast on each side of the split.

Working with John Blezard's art department, Ray created a moon view which not only conformed to factual geography but managed to make

matching with process shots easier. The colors of the moon surface blend from reddish-yellow to gray to orange-brown. This prepares viewers for later composite scenes in which the moon colors differ for technical reasons.

In view of the JASON experience, Schneer doubtless wanted a director slightly less opinionated than Don Chaffey. Easy-going Nathan (Jerry) Juran, veteran of 20 MILLION MILES TO EARTH and 7TH VOYAGE, flew to England to helm the show. "Columbia felt that we should have an American's point of view, rather than an Englishman's, so it wouldn't appear to be a completely foreign picture," says Harryhausen. The role of Bedford's fiancée, played by Martha Hyer, further broadened the trans-Atlantic feel. "Nigel Kneale's first script didn't have a woman in it, but the front office felt, as they do with these pictures, 'You gotta put a woman in it for woman's identi-

fication.' I thought Nigel worked it in rather well. She comes by accident to the moon. She wasn't a professor or professor's daughter—cliches that are very hard to avoid, because everything has been done before." Edward Judd and Lionel Jeffries (co-stars in THE LONG SHIPS) became, respectively, the would-be playwright Bedford and the eccentric inventor, Cavor. Peter Finch even played a bit part as a snooty Cockney summons server.

According to Juran, shooting moved smoother than his previous Dynamation outings: "I guess by that time they weren't so worried about how much time we took, or how much they paid me." Juran eschewed Chaffey's multiple camera technique for live action; the Panavision lens took in large groups without need for double coverage. Anamorphic lens expert Arthur Garrat advised cameraman Wilkie Cooper and Harryhausen on the Panavision quirks.

The film had the good fortune of playing when the first manned satellite landed on the lunar surface (no Selenites, however). Harryhausen's modern moon-shot scenes actually turned up years later during a CBS broadcast of the real Apollo flight as an illustration of what the astronauts were experiencing.

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The underground grotto with the Nautilus from MYSTERIOUS ISLAND.







Two more oversized animals from MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, a phororhacos and a mollusk, results of Captain Nemo's attempt to increase the world's food supply.

18mm lenses."

Harryhausen was never able to return to the sodium vapor process of compositing, even though it was in many ways superior to blue-screen. "The little beam-splitting prism that went behind the lens of the sodium vapor camera deteriorated to such an extent that [Rank] could not replace it. Disney had a franchise on it in Hollywood, but they modified it. You'd have thought Rank (or their successors) would have contacted Disney and said, 'What have you done with our process—and why can't we use what you've got?' It's remarkable that the Rank Organization felt it was simply too much trouble. Accountants probably proved it wasn't financially viable, so they dropped the whole thing. It's a problem with economics winning out."

Thus the effects were done with blue screen and travelling mattes. As with GULLIVER, animation was kept to a minimum. Only four major animated creatures appear: two learned Selenites, the bulb-headed Grand Lunar, and a giant caterpillar-like creature.

"That was probably the most difficult to animate in the film," says Harryhausen, "because of all the little segments along the bottom, the legs. On the other hand, there are not that many compared to, say, a real caterpillar. It's the effect that counts in the end."

Harryhausen worked again with Arthur Hayward on the models, and with Les Bowie and his crew on the miniature

landscapes and moon interiors. Studio craftsmen molded Selenite costumes for pint-sized actors. "I've never been in favor of this," Harryhausen says, "but to animate Selenites crawling over the sphere would've taken an age! You try to budget your time, not to take more than three or four days for a single cut; otherwise, you drop behind schedule. You've got to be practical. I think we had 20 or 30 suits made, and put children inside them for size."

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**“The first film had a man in an awful tyrannosaurus suit,” says Harryhausen of remaking ONE MILLION B.C. “I felt we could do a little better than that.”**

MOON (the addition of the quotation marks is a literal “in” joke; they actually are “in” the moon) threatens to float away even without the anti-gravity Cavorite. The tongue-in-cheek prologue and epilogue, the romantic comedy between Judd and Hyer, and the wacky performance by Jeffries are delightful, but they mitigate against taking the adventure very seriously. Britain embraced the film for what it was; America seemed uncomprehending. The movie made a profit, though nothing near the stupendous success of 7TH VOYAGE.

“I think it was a very underrated film,” opines Harryhausen. “It had a lot going for it: humor, good actors; it moved well. I think Jerry did the best he’d ever done for us. I don’t know why it didn’t do better. Perhaps posterity will look upon it with kinder eyes.”

Though not a great picture, it is spectacular to see in Panavision. The sets and miniatures of the Moon are properly vast and barren, the crystal Moon caverns delightfully awesome. These contrast nicely with the quaint Victorian milieu, which brings to mind the sets of the classic Hammer films. And that was where Harryhausen was headed next.

**B**y the mid-1960’s, Hammer Films had expanded beyond color Gothic remakes. Producer Michael Carreras, in partnership with Kenneth Hyman of Seven Arts, wanted to remake KING KONG with Harryhausen as effects master, but RKO refused to relinquish the rights. Instead, the producer decided on a new version of Hal Roach’s ONE MILLION B.C. (1940).

“You’re competing with an old film which wasn’t half bad,”

says Carreras. “But they used real lizards. We decided if we’re going to make the film at all, we had to have the latest technique of making these things look real. It was the company’s decision that we wouldn’t make the film unless we could get the best.”

Luckily for Hammer, Charles Schneer was busy with a non-fantasy film, YOU MUST BE JOKING, and Harryhausen was available. And since Schneer was not on the project, Don Chaffey agreed to direct. “They came to me and said, ‘Ray would like to have you,’” recalls Chaffey, “and I said, ‘Yes, of course.’ Michael and I had known each other for years. We cobbled up the story over a few weekends at his house and mine from seeing the original MAN AND HIS MATE [the British title], then sat down and went through Europe on paper as to where we’d shoot it. The Canary Islands had volcanos and such, and it seemed right.”

The Hammer-Seven Arts distribution deal with 20th Century-Fox led to the casting of Raquel Welch. With a few minor roles and the female lead in Fox’s FANTASTIC VOYAGE under her belt, the 25-year-old actress was poised on the edge of international stardom. “I was called on the telephone by Richard Zanuck, who was head of the studio,” recalls Welch, “and Dick said, ‘We’ve got this fabulous project for you, Raquel, called ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.’ I thought, ‘A dinosaur movie—I’ll never live this down!’ But he said I’d be going to London, and this was the 1960s—swinging London and all that. They told me it was Hammer, who always did a good job with their budget, and they told me about Ray Harryhausen, who I realized was a kind of genius with this frame-by-frame pho-



A composite shot of Kerwin Mathews as Lemuel Gulliver, among the inhabitants of Lilliput in THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER.

tography. I figured, ‘Steve McQueen got away with THE BLOB; maybe I can get away with this.’ All I really wanted was a decent acting part.” She was cast opposite English actor John Richardson, previously the lead in Hammer’s remake of SHE. “I thought, ‘He’s the pretty one—those blue eyes and that face! I look butch next to him!’”

The models created by Harryhausen, again with an assist from taxidermist Arthur Hayward, were small but magnificently detailed. The horned ceratosaurus, for example, stood only 11 inches high. The archelon, a prehistoric sea turtle, had a cast fiberglass shell atop his rubber and metal body. The allosaurus is doubtless the film’s finest dinosaur,

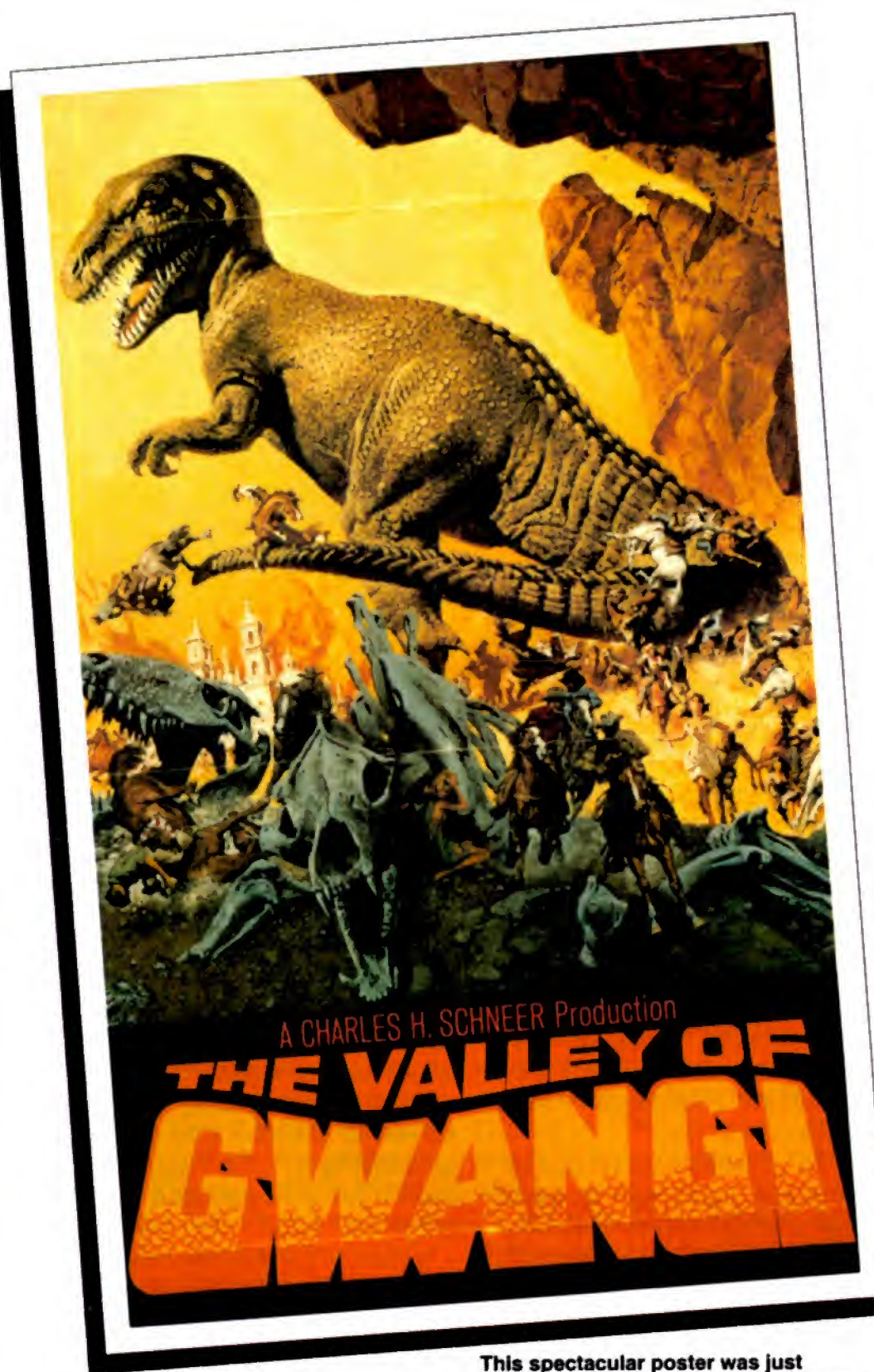
and the one with the most character. Lean and muscular, with a slash of a mouth that leers grimly, it appears “only” about nine feet high on screen, far taller than a man but small enough not to overwhelm the players. “The first film had done this scene with a man in an awful tyrannosaurus suit,” recalls Harryhausen, “and it looked so dreadful they ended up keeping it hidden behind a bush. I felt we could do a little better than that.”

Much of the dinosaur action is directly inspired by the original film. The climactic attack on the cave people by a blown-up iguana was to be a set-piece involving the most malicious brontosaurus since

THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER relied less on animation, but it “was no vacation” for Harryhausen, due to the numerous traveling mattes.







This spectacular poster was just about all the promotion **THE VALLEY OF GWANGI** ever received from Warner Bros. "It was ludicrous that they would just dump it!" says Harryhausen.

**KING KONG.** Harryhausen sculpted a clay model, sketched the shots, even made a series of stills to illustrate the scene—and it wound up not being shot. "We found out the script was too long with all the other action in it," he ex-

plains, "and we'd have so much animation, it'd take forever and a day to finish it."

The director found Welch "very pleasant. She worked hard. She's given interviews in which she's said that the director was insensitive to what she

wanted to do; of course, what she didn't understand was if you're doing a Dynamation sequence she can't flit from here to there; otherwise, she'd run across a matte line and get her head or tits cut off the screen."

"Don was gruff, a real character," the star recalls. "I went to him and started to talk about the motivation of the character. And he said to me, 'That's very interesting, but I'd like you just to start at Rock A over there, go to Rock B, and look back and smile.' I remember thinking, 'There's nothing I can do to imbue this role with anything.' But the camera is the director's eye, and when I saw the film, I thought he was very sympathetic to Luana [her character]. Under this gruff exterior he was quite sensitive. He just didn't want to show it."

Dealing with imaginary dinosaurs provided the usual on-location sense of absurdity. "They were very precise about it," Welch says. "They told us where the eyelines were, when to thrust a spear, now the pterodactyl is coming closer, that sort of thing. When you're doing it, it just seems so ridiculously silly!"

Co-star Martine Beswicke agrees. "It was just hysterical. Ray Harryhausen would get in a truck and would do all these movements. We'd be running and poking with spears, stabbing at the air with nothing there, just Ray going, 'Over here! Now over here!'"

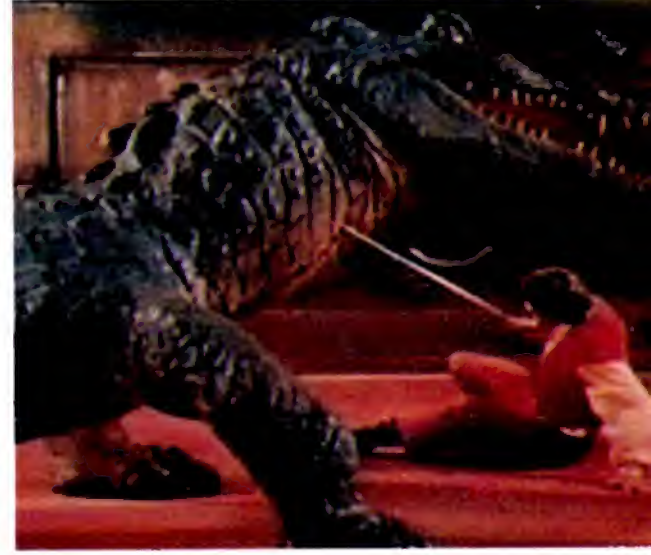
The crew returned to ABPC Studios in England for the cave interiors and blue-screen work. The most complex dinosaur-human interaction was the fight with the young allosaurus, all of which was shot

on stage. Wire work involved hoisting a cave-extra aloft, later to be married with the model allosaur, which appeared to have the stuntman in his teeth.

Because of time and budget limitations, Harryhausen substituted a live lizard and tarantula in two early scenes of Richardson's trek across the wilds of the Canary Islands. "I got some complaints about our talented lizard," Ray admits, "but I thought he did rather well." The lizard was filmed at high speed, which added an illusion of massiveness to the movements, and intercut with a full-sized rubber tongue slurping around Richardson's leg. The sequence harkens unfortunately back to the stock footage days of **ROBOT MONSTER**. Les Bowie and Chaffey himself ended up shooting the "creation" sequence that opens the film.

Animation and effects took nine months. Harryhausen adapted his replacement techniques, substituting sections of model spears positioned over the live-action plates to make man and model seem like they exist together. Also in the allosaurus scene, there is a tracking shot that Harryhausen uses as a background plate, with foreground miniatures moving past the camera. When Tumak (Richardson) impales the raging beast, wire suspension held the model aloft briefly, before it came crashing down onto the miniature ground. The flying reptile scene shows another innovative combination of camera movement and post-production tricks. Miss Welch dives behind a convenient rock, replaced by a jointed miniature of the crea-

In the giant land of Brobdengnag, Gulliver battles a crocodile. The scene features some nice interaction between the actor and the animated model.





ture's claws. The camera pans with the monster as it flaps off. In fact the pteranodon remains stationary in frame; the movement is supplied by Wilkie Cooper's camera. Such camera movements have become commonplace in the wake of STAR WARS and the advent of computerized movement recording, but this was done by practiced eye and attention to detail.

"After the film was over, I spent six months just watching him," recalls Carreras. "The man was a genius. The frightening thing is, when you're looking at the rushes, after a full day's work, you've got six frames! It's better to hold them up to the light—they've gone by so quickly!"

Adds Chaffey, "Ray did the best job he could under the circumstances. We had no dialogue to speak of; it's very difficult to do a picture like that. JASON I liked and still do, but MILLION YEARS was just sort of an artificial mishmash. I liked the original better, quite frankly."

"I thought both versions had their virtues," says Harryhausen. "The first had more heart, possibly. Ours was more brutal, more cruel, which was as it was back then."

Twentieth Century-Fox had an inexpensive money-maker on their hands: the negative cost was about 450,000 pounds. Although due to studio bookkeeping the picture did not go into profit for years, the international success of the film—largely prompted by the iconographic image of Welch in her chamois bikini—reestablished Harryhausen at the box-office.

"They didn't approach me to do another picture, but I couldn't have done it anyway," says Harryhausen. "Charles and I had already started another one." Dinosaurs had been successful for Fox and Hammer. They should be successful for Schneer, Harryhausen and Columbia as well. Right?

**T**he world seemed to change radically in the 1960s: attitudes, morals, tastes, and styles. Some things remained constant: like Ray Harryhausen's mode of working, and his taste

**"I put them in to give some contact," Harryhausen admits of miniature props in the crocodile fight. "You wormed it out of me—the Secrets of Dynamation."**

### THE 3 WORLDS OF GULLIVER



Harryhausen holds up the crocodile stop-motion model, one of only two used in THE THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER. The other was a squirrel.

in films. Many filmmakers love recreating the movies they saw as children. Harryhausen was no exception. Rummaging through his garage, he found a copy of the script and storyboards for his mentor Willis O'Brien's aborted GWANGI, which he brought to Charles Schneer's attention.

"If Obie had done it when it was planned in 1942," Ray reflects, "it would've been magnificent. The original was laid out with many matte paintings, similar to KING KONG. Possibly it would've been better, with a nicer mood to it. It's grand to go first class, and Obie had wonderful concepts, but you compromise to do a certain thing on time, on a budget. I laid ours out in the manner of BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, using split screens and back projection, rather than matte paintings."

According to film historian George Turner, RKO had spent more than \$50,000 prepping the original, with O'Brien's stop-motion monsters to be combined with di-

rector Ernest Schoedesack's live action, set in the Southwest. A group of contemporary cowboys discover a lost valley in the Grand Canyon which houses an assortment of prehistoric animals. They capture an allosaurus for exhibition; Gwangi escapes (naturally), causes havoc, and is destroyed.

Marcel Delgado constructed several prototypes of the saurian star; Paul Sawtell composed, arranged and recorded a score; Mario Larrinaga painted glass matte paintings; the art department crafted several miniature sets to guide the full-scale construction. GWANGI was to have been a co-production with Colonial Pictures, but when RKO fell on hard times, it scaled back production, and GWANGI was dropped.

O'Brien recycled the concepts over the years, such as the horseback roping sequence and the attack by lions in MIGHTY JOE YOUNG, and the cowboys-vs-dinosaurs concept in his story for BEAST FROM HOLLOW MOUNTAIN.

Because the rights to various RKO titles were scattered after Howard Hughes sold the studio to General Tire in 1955, the actual ownership of the property was obscured.

"There were various legal problems involved with the credit, a rather complicated arrangement that went through various guilds for arbitration," recalls Harryhausen. "Originally, there was an involvement with [producer] John Speaks, and a famous novelist Harold Lamb on the original, and there was a lady on it, Emily Barrye. But everyone knew it was Obie's idea."

Everyone in the genre world, perhaps, but Willis O'Brien did not receive even so much as a courtesy credit on the completed picture, for reasons out of Harryhausen's hands. The final credit goes solely to William E. Bast.

"I don't know why O'Brien wasn't credited, at least for the original concept," muses Bast. "I had just written a Screen Gems TV pilot for THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH, and Columbia asked if I was interested in a project for Charlie Schneer. I hadn't written a feature before, and this was a good break. Charlie was gruff, insensitive as all hell, kind of a downer, but Ray Harryhausen made up for that with his childlike excitement, absolute involvement and appreciation for the project. When Ray showed me original O'Brien storyboards, the story just came to life. I wasn't aware there had been a script prepared; we just had the action sequences. It was really Conan Doyle's THE LOST WORLD, wasn't it? We knew that England wasn't going to be the location, and decided on Spain. You couldn't really do a rodeo in Spain, so we came up with the idea of an American travelling rodeo playing in a foreign country. That way we could stage the climax in a bull ring."

Rather than update the story, Harryhausen and Bast pushed it back to turn of the century. Says Harryhausen, "By setting the time backward, we eliminated at least the



cliches about the army moving in with tanks and missiles."

Still, Harryhausen followed the O'Brien pattern precisely. The capture of the mounted cowboy by a pterodactyl and the subsequent bronco-busting of the flying reptile, the battle between Gwangi and a horned dinosaur, and Gwangi's trapping itself in a cave-in all appear exactly the way they were designed 25 years earlier.

English and Spanish actors filled most of the roles; the three leads came from Hollywood: genre veteran Richard Carlson, decorative Gila Golan, and James Franciscus. "It was really MIGHTY JOE YOUNG turned into a western," the leading man opines. "Since MIGHTY JOE YOUNG was a pretty good picture, I thought it was a fine idea."

For a number of reasons, including so-so boxoffice results, the 14-year relationship between Charles Schneer and Columbia ended. "VALLEY OF GWANGI was planned for Columbia," recalls Schneer, "but in their own wisdom they decided they didn't want that picture. So we took it to Warner Bros."

It had become Warner Brothers-Seven Arts, owned by Elliot Hyman and run by his son Kenneth, co-producer of ONE MILLION YEARS BC. The Hymans knew the potential of dinosaurs. Preproduction delay cost the unit the use of cinematographer Wilkie Cooper, who was replaced by Ervin Hillier.

In Spain, Schneer procured the cathedral at Cuenca for the climax, the bullring at Almeria for the presentation and escape of the allosaurus, and rocky terrain north of Madrid for the "hidden valley."

The action highlight is the sequence in which the cowboys lasso the furious dinosaur. To get plates for the long shots, a Jeep carried Harryhausen and a 15-foot "monster stick" in abrupt circles to approximate the movements of the giant reptile. Later, Harryhausen removed the Jeep with a sliding split screen technique; the debris kicked up by the skidding Jeep gave the impression that Gwangi had caused the dust cloud.

**"People are under the delusion we have ideal conditions when we shoot," Harryhausen says. "That's not true. Sometimes, conditions aren't perfect."**



While setting up a forced perspective effects shot for GULLIVER, Harryhausen himself towers over a miniature building, looking like one of his own creations.

Franciscus and Bast have diametrically opposite opinions on script alterations and the film's director, Jim O'Connolly, who had helmed the typically tasteful Herman Cohen thriller, BERSERK! Opines Bast, "The director was monumentally stupid. Charlie opted for someone who matched his own insensitivity. O'Connolly started tampering with the script as they were leaving. I thought, 'This is going to be a mess.'"

On the other hand, Franciscus says, "Jim O'Connolly has a nice sense of humor—a happy sort of chap. We did a little line revision ourselves. The character I played, for example, I thought lacked humor; he was too straight. I tried to get a little more charm into him, a little more twinkle. Gila Golan had quite a little accent, so we had to dub every line. She was inexperienced, but eager to learn. Richard Carlson was a great guy, an old pro, but his health wasn't terrific."

Schneer's old nemesis Don Chaffey was nearby. "We were in Southern Spain doing TWIST OF SAND, and Charles was nearby making a quite bad

picture called GWANGI. They needed to borrow one of our cameras for one reason or other, so I went up with it. Charles introduced me to his people saying, 'This man dislikes me as much as I dislike him—and he made my most successful picture!'"

On-set gags included a crane lifting the boy from his moving horse, a full-size pterodactyl, and a real horse tricked up to look like the tiny eohippus in a long shot during a chase. "Ray did very little work in terms of physically producing the picture," Franciscus recalls. "Most of his stuff was prior to shooting; then after our work he'd go and do his stop-motion number. This very quiet, gentle guy told me he actually makes the models in a pressure cooker in his kitchen! I had heard some rather grim comments about Charles before the picture, but he and I got along famously. He didn't interfere artistically with anyone; his concept was to make the best picture we could."

The six-week schedule didn't allow much time, and some of the better shots were

optically flopped for reuse. One scene of riders entering the rocky valley had a partial matte painting added by the Shepperton Studio artists; the same shot appears *sans* painting a few moments later. And some of the background plates were less than perfect. "People are under the delusion that we have ideal conditions when we shoot on location," comments Harryhausen. "That's simply not true. You try to allow for snags, but sometimes things aren't perfect."

Ray recycled his triceratops armature into the film's multi-pronged styracosaurus, but Gwangi itself was half-again as large as similar puppets in MILLION YEARS because of the need for close-up detail.

With the film's massive number of animation shots, it stands to reason that some turned out better than others. In the roping sequence—five months of work—sometimes Harryhausen's miniature wire ropes line up with the real-life lassos; sometimes they don't. The quirky ornithomimus fleeing the cowboys glides for several frames rather than moving sequentially. Long shots of Gwangi's first appearance have a nice diffusion to give the impression of distance; yet the shots of Gwangi buried by the landslide or being hauled across the trailer show a model with less life than the worst Godzilla. The errors are doubly maddening because most of the work is fantastic and believable. The flying cycle of the pterodactyl, for example, slowly down perceptibly after it rises with the boy in its claws, "weighted down" by its burden. The "dawn horse," eohippus, is as personable as any character in the Harryhausen canon.

Gwangi, by virtue of its screen time, has as much personality as a carnivorous dinosaur can have, but he changes color, from blue to gray to greenish or brownish, often within the same sequence. "I've forgotten what the reason was," shrugs Harryhausen. "Certain scenes were flopped over and the dupe wasn't quite on the nose. Some of it could have been bad lighting. But there was a

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# DEATH OF DYNAMATION

## Has Stop-Motion been stopped?

By Mike Lyons

Audiences used to watch stop-motion animation with their mouths agape, mentally asking themselves, "How'd they do that?!" Today, blasé moviegoers are most likely to groan, "I know exactly how they did that."

Recently, advances in computer generated graphics special effects have taken over the "Wow" and "Gee-whiz!" departments. This has caused a buzz among industry insiders that perhaps stop-motion has been, well, stopped. "The shift from stop-motion to 3D computer graphics is from working with something tactile, that you can see right before you as you change it, to something that is more abstract, but with a wider range of technical and creative possibilities," says Mark Voelpel, a visual effects supervisor with R/Greenberg Associates, a division of R/GA Digital Studios, who have provided digital and computer graphics for numerous films including PREDATOR, IN THE LINE OF FIRE, DEMOLITION MAN, and THE SHADOW.

Stop-motion animator Phil Tippet adds, "The fear factor involved with all of this, in the concern that I would have for more traditional animation skills, is that there's a tremendous amount of emphasis now on so-called 'motion capture.' The philosophy in American industry in particular is speed. I



Dimensional animation has actually undergone a recent resurgence, with the successful release of TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

could see that being problematic initially for the trade of animation if live-action 'motion capture' ends up being behavioral based systems, where certain actions are plugged into the computer and you can access those actions from some kind of library file. It might make animators redundant in a few years."

Stop-motion animation, as its name suggests, is a process in which a three-dimensional model (usually a miniature) is moved a fraction of an inch, with each movement photographed and then shown in succession, in order to give the illusion of movement. This painstaking process has been around almost as long as film itself. One of the earliest examples of stop-mo-

tion is the 1925 version of THE LOST WORLD. This silent film features scenes of prehistoric beasts that, although not JURASSIC PARK, aren't exactly BARNEY, either. For the time in which they were produced, the effects are a wonder to behold.

The beasts in THE LOST WORLD were created by Willis O'Brien, the stop-motion pioneer who would set new standards in special effects with two of his later films, KING KONG (1933) and MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1949). O'Brien's young protege and assistant on the latter was none other than Ray Harryhausen, who would go on to bring the illusion of life to "Dynamation" (the name he gave his brand of stop-motion) in such films as

THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, MYSTERIOUS ISLAND, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS, and CLASH OF THE TITANS.

"He was a tremendous influence on a great number of us who ended up getting into the motion picture racket," says Phil Tippet. "I think that Ray and his producer, Charles Schneer, were pretty much single-handedly responsible for the continuance of fantasy-oriented films." Tippet also adds that these films bridged Hollywood's heyday of fantasy and horror with the films of today. "The Harryhausen/Schneer pictures were the link between that tradition and Lucas and Spielberg," he says.

Like Ray Harryhausen, other names surfaced and became synonymous with this illusion of life, from George Pal, whose "Puppetoons" allowed toys to dance in 1958's TOM THUMB, to Richard Edlund, who turned Manhattan into a living hell for GHOST-BUSTERS.

During these decades, George Lucas' STAR WARS trilogy broke new ground in all areas of special effects, including stop-motion animation. It was on these films that Phil Tippet cut his artistic teeth. Tippet animated the "mini-monster" chess match in the original STAR WARS and brought the "Tauntauns" to life for THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. It was the third installment,



1983's RETURN OF THE JEDI, however, that brought Phil Tippet an Oscar for Best Special Effects. That same year, Phil Tippet made PREHISTORIC BEAST, a ten-minute short subject featuring dinosaurs, made in his garage and accomplished completely with stop-motion animation.

Phil would eventually leave Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic to start up his own special effects company, Tippet Studio. With his studio, Mr. Tippet has given us such scenes as the ED-209 breaking up a board meeting in ROBOCOP, a Harryhausen-like scorpion in HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS, and the two-headed dragon in WILLOW.

Ironically, it was WILLOW that first introduced the computer-generated effect known as "morphing" (short for "metamorphosis"), which gives the illusion that a person or thing is fluidly transforming into another shape. The process, which would later be used to great effect in James Cameron's films THE ABYSS and TERMINATOR 2, proved to be a great leap forward in the world of computer effects.

Computer graphics (CG) have been threatening to invade movies for years now. Since TRON, which was revolutionary 12 years ago but, oddly enough, looks almost archaic today, filmmakers have been intrigued by the possibilities of computer animation. "The early '80's were really the nascent years of computer graphics. That's when things were just getting started from a production standpoint," says Mark Voelpel.

Last year, however, with JURASSIC PARK, the worlds of stop-motion and computers finally "clashed." Phil Tippet's studio, slated to provide effects for JURASSIC PARK, had done extensive tests (which, by the way, are as fluid as anything a computer could create), using so-called "go-motion" techniques to eliminate the flaw in most stop-motion work: the strobing effect which results from filming a stationary object with no motion blur. But early computer tests impressed Steven Spielberg so much that he decided against

## ANIMATION EXTINCTION?

**"The philosophy today is speed," says Tippet. "That could be problematic for animation, if you could access actions from a computer; it might make animators redundant."**



Another good sign for the prospects of dimensional animation was the Academy Award given to Aardman Animations' delightful short, THE WRONG TROUSERS.

both stop- and go-motion.

Strangely enough, JURASSIC PARK would also go on to represent the first time that computers and stop-motion "worked" together. Serving as "Dinosaur Supervisor" on the film, Phil Tippet and his crew at Tippet Studio created Dinosaur Input Devices, (D.I.D.'s). These were specially designed three-dimensional models with electronic sensors at each of their joints. The D.I.D.'s were manipulated by Tippet's animators and the information was fed into computers. "It was pretty clear at that time that there weren't a great deal of computer animators that had the skill or the training to do what was required in JURASSIC," says Tippet. "So, JURASSIC was a training ground for making those links, the crossovers between computer graphics and traditional stop-motion animators."

In addition to the D.I.D.'s, Tippet made the computer animators take mime and performance classes, for the study of body movements. JURASSIC PARK's production turned into

a trading of experience between the traditionalists at Tippet Studio and the computer animators at Industrial Light and Magic. "It worked pretty much both ways," says Tippet. "There was a lot we learned from the computer graphics people in terms of the tools and there was a lot that the computer graphics guys learned from our more traditional knowledge of how things go together."

"With TERMINATOR 2 and JURASSIC PARK, studios began embracing computer graphics," says Mark Voelpel. This "love affair" culminated this past summer, when almost every film released (THE FLINTSTONES, SPEED, THE SHADOW, FORREST GUMP, THE MASK, etc.) contained some form of computer-generated graphics. A few years ago, many of these effects would have been achieved by other means, such as stop-motion. Mark Voelpel says that the attraction filmmakers have to computers is one of time and economics. "The biggest reason that producers are us-

ing computer graphics so much now is that it's become cost effective to do so. One factor with stop-motion is the long amount of time spent shooting, which requires a sound stage, cameras, lights and crew, while CGI is primarily a post production process."

It's not all rose-colored monitors, however; just like anything else, computers have their down side. "There are a lot of people that are claiming to be animators now that they can click a mouse and put two points together and key-frame an image," notes Phil Tippet. "The way a great deal of the technology is being sold is that every man's an animator; anybody can do it." Mark Voelpel agrees, "One thing that's very frustrating for me when I see some computer graphics work is how uncinematic it can be. We have a hundred years of history of the cinema, of how shots are cut together, how stories are told, how lighting and composition are used. I don't understand why some computer graphics people think they have to reinvent all those things from scratch."

This seems to be the biggest scare the computer takeover has caused, that technology will dehumanize visual effects and strangle creativity. Voelpel adds that, "Whether it's CGI or more traditional media, the creative process requires pretty much the same skills from the director, designer, and lead animator." This is why, on any computer graphics project, R/Greenberg Associates works with people in traditional media, such as sketch artists, cel animators and even dancers, much the same way Tippet Studio did with ILM. "There should be creative continuity, bridging traditional media and computer graphics," says Voelpel.

Once the technology and creativity do come together, does that mean an end to stop-motion? Phil Tippet says, "The craft of stop-motion animation is very much an artifact of the industrial age of machining and cameras; now digital technology is upon us, and it's definitely going to change the way that things are made."



"In the past in computer graphics, it was such a challenge to acquire the technology and learn to use it, that the technology itself was often the decisive factor in giving people a competitive edge," says Mark Voelpel. "Now, because the hardware and software are becoming more accessible and easier to use, the differentiating factor is creative talent."

Basically, if that creativity isn't fed into the computers somehow, they're useless in terms of filmmaking. Phil Tippet says, "The invention of computer graphics has really done nothing. It's a new tool. It hasn't displaced any skills; if anything, it's made those skills and the knowledge more necessary than ever."

Mark Voelpel believes it's only a matter of time before these basic skills make a comeback. "Things may go so far in the digital direction that eventually, people like traditional puppeteers are going to be the ones that are hard to find," he says. "At some point, people who are skilled and experienced in traditional media may have more opportunities, because the marketplace may become saturated with people who only have experience in digital production."

Amidst all of this talk of the microchip world, stop-motion is experiencing a mini-resurgence. The Disney studio was so impressed by the success of last year's *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS* that they've given the film's di-



The Phurba, a sort of living dagger from *THE SHADOW*, is exactly the sort of effect which once upon a time would have seemed to be a natural for dimensional animation. Instead, the strange object was given life by R/GA Digital Studios.

rector, Henry Selick, the go ahead for another all stop-motion feature, an adaptation of Roald Dahl's *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH*. This past March, the Oscar for Best Animated Short Subject went to Nick Park's stop-motion marvel, *THE WRONG TROUSERS*, and the films of Ray Harryhausen were recently honored by a retrospective at New York's Film Forum (aptly entitled "Wild About Harryhausen").

This leads one to believe

that the computer scare may be just that, a scare, and nothing more. After all, it's not the effects that make a film. "All of the material that I've been working with over the years, I can categorize it all as junk," notes Phil Tippet. "Ultimately, a camera, however nicely made it is, or a computer, however well-thought through in design, within a few months, weeks, or years, is relegated to the junk heap, and what is left is the artifacts, the content, the material, the

craft that is made from the tools."

Essentially, it's not the effects that we remember when a movie ends, it's the characters and the story itself. But, as long as these "reel wizards" keep finding ways to weave effects into these plots, there will always be a place for the yesteryear of stop-motion and the tomorrow of computers.

And there will always be someone in the audience saying, "How'd they do that?" □



Left: Adam Valdez and Pete Konig, of Phil Tippet's studio, pose with the models of the *JURASSIC PARK* dinosaurs. Right: Tippet himself and members of his crew learn to work with the Dinosaur Input Device, which allowed them to use their stop-motion know-how to bring life to computer-generated dinosaurs.





VA





# VAMPIRELLA

## QUEEN OF THE NIGHT

**The comic-book horror icon is back at bat.**

By Dan Cziraky

The pale-skinned brunette in the scarlet bikini was a horror icon for more than a decade. She graced the covers of her own magazine, inspired costumed imitators at comic book conventions, and was even immortalized in flesh-colored, snap-together, polystyrene plastic by Aurora Models. Her six-foot door poster was a staple in the bedrooms of teenage boys across the nation, and she even had her own fan club. She is Vampirella, the sexy siren from the planet Draculon, where rivers of blood nourished a race of shape-shifting humanoids, until the twin suns dried up the rivers and sentenced her people to die of thirst. She escaped that fate by purest luck—an exploratory spacecraft from Earth landed on Draculon and carried her back to this planet, where the waters that give her life flowed only in the veins of the populace. Her thirst branded her a vampire, and her ability to transform into a bat only seemed to confirm the legends of old. Just the type of girl every red-blooded horror fan wanted to bring home to meet Mom and drain Dad.

Warren Publishing's *Vampirella* comic magazine debuted in 1969, the brainchild of publisher Jim Warren. After seeing Roger Vadim's *BARBARELLA*, starring Jane Fonda as the sexy French comic book heroine, Warren decided that the same mixture of sex, humor, and

adventure would work for horror. Deciding upon the name "Vampirella," he then tossed the idea to *Famous Monsters of Filmland* editor Forrest J Ackerman, who conceived the premise. Famed fantasy artist Frank Frazetta then painted the portrait of Vampirella that was used as the magazine's first cover, with comics artist Trina Robbins designing the character's costume.

As with Warren's other horror comics, *Creepy* and *Eerie*, Vampirella served as the host of the stories presented inside. She also starred in her own feature, with *Vampirella #1* presenting her origin in a story written by Ackerman and drawn by Tom Sutton. As usual, Ackerman relied on terrible puns as his chief source of humor, and the mix of horror and comedy didn't quite congeal. The next Vampi story was drawn by Mike Royer, and it was the last of her features (except for a cameo in the third issue, where she fights her "sister," Evilly, Dark Princess of Vaalgania).

She continued as hostess for the book, and was resurrected as its star in issue #8, with a story by new writer-editor Archie Goodwin and Tom Sutton. Gone were the bad puns and sex-kitten portrayal, replaced with a serious horror tale involving Vampi with the demon-worshipping Cult of Chaos. It set the direction for the character for years to come, and led to the introductions of the alcoholic magician Pendragon, vampire hunter Dr.



Opposite page: The Jim Balent cover for the Cain-Vampirella team-up book. Above: Model Kathy Christian, who dons the costume at conventions.





Left: In 1992, Harris Comics' VAMPIRELLA #1, with an Adam Hughes cover, launched a new Vampi series. Right: A Jim Balent panel from VAMPIRELLA #3.

Conrad Van Helsing, and young stud Adam Van Helsing (Vampi's future paramour). Artist José Gonzalez became the primary Vampi artist with issue #12, and his stunningly rendered black-and-white illustrations, full-color covers, and full-page pin-ups propelled the character towards greater popularity.

The Vampirella stories ran the gamut of science fiction and horror plots (often blending the two with mixed results). She traveled back to 19th-century England and met Count Dracula; fought off the romantic advances of a Central American sun god; encountered Devastator, a zombie rock star feeding on the blood of his fans; discovered a Jules Verne-esque city beneath Manhattan; and even embarked on a short career as a B-movie actress. Throughout her adventures, the element of sex was ever-present. Because the Warren magazines didn't adhere to the

Comics Code Authority, the stories were often as bloody as they were sexy. During the free-wheeling late '70s and early '80s, the artists finally stopped tip-toeing around the nudity issue, much to the delight of Vampi's readers.

As the years past, and writers and artists came and went, the series varied in quality from good to outright ludicrous. In 1975, Hammer Films announced a feature film about the character, to star alluring actress Barbara Leigh (SEVEN). Hammer went bankrupt before the film was ever made, but Leigh posed for several cover photos that ran in 1976. After a brief hiatus, Gonzalez returned as the regular artist with issue #103, but the audience continued to drop and issue #112, dated February 1983, was the last regular Warren issue. Warren Publishing collapsed soon afterwards, and such stalwarts as *Creepy*, *Eerie* and *Famous Monsters* printed their last issues that year. Harris

Comics acquired Warren's comic magazine properties through bankruptcy auction (Ackerman was able to purchase *Famous Monsters*) and published *Vampirella* #113, mostly reprinting old Warren material, in 1988.

Harris decided to give Vampi another try in 1991, and published the four-issue limited series, *Vampirella: Morning in America*, distributed by Dark Horse Comics. This square-bound, black-and-white comic series, written by Kurt Busiek, penciled by Louis LaChance, and inked by John Nyberg, with color covers by Michael Wm. Kaluta, brought Vampi, Pendragon, and the Van Helsing into the '90s, where warlock Ethan Shroud leads the Unseelie Congress, a conglomeration of supernatural beings and monsters that has united under the banner of the dark god Chaos. A decade earlier, Vampirella and her companions attempted to defeat Shroud, but Van Helsing was taken prisoner by Shroud,

while Vampirella went into hiding. Shroud, bored after a decade of having no one oppose his rule, sets out to create a new Vampirella, and targets teenage schoolgirl Chelsea Cantrell. As it turns out, Ms. Normandy, the headmistress at the private school Chelsea attends, is in fact Vampirella. Vampi comes out of hiding to rejoin Adam and Pendragon in their destruction of the Unseelie Congress, but not before Chelsea is turned into a vampire and Conrad is killed.

A special black & white one-shot book, *Vampirella: Summer Nights*, and a guest appearance in the color *Creepy 1993 Fearbook* paved the way for Vampi's own full-color monthly adventures. Harris Comics' *Vampirella* #1, dated November 1992, was very different from its Warren Publishing predecessor. Gone were the horror anthology back-up stories that Vampi hosted—the book was devoted exclusively to her exploits. *Morning in America*



writer Kurt Busiek penned the first chapter of the four-part "Dracula War." Penciled by newcomer Louis Small Jr., and inked by Jim Balent (Malibu's *From the Darkness*), the first issue had a slick, distinctive style, and a stunning cover by Adam Hughes. New series writer Tom Sniegoski took over the reigns with issue #2 (which was significantly delayed and dated February 1993), with Vampi and Pendragon in France, fighting off Dracula's minions. Balent soloed on the art for issue #3, dated March 1993. Harris was having a number of internal problems, along with external situations, which caused delays in printing and shipping by months. Four months passed before issue #4, dated July 1993, was released. Small returned to pencil the conclusion of the "Dracula War," but Balent had left Harris for DC Comics' new *Catwoman* monthly, and was replaced by Matt Banning. Adam Hughes had also departed, with the issue's cover by John Snyder III (in a style similar to Frank Frazetta). Banning's inks were very unflattering to Small's pencils, and it was the last book Small would work on. *Vampirella* #5, dated November 1993, featured a fill-in story by Dan Jolley and round-robin art by Karl Altstaetter, John Stinson, Bob Downs, and Jason Felix, with a cover by Dan Brereton (*Creepy*). It was a weak offering, and Harris recognized it was losing readers.

In a bold move, Harris retitled the book *Vengeance of Vampirella*, and promised both retailers and readers consistent, on-schedule printing. Issue #1, dated April 1994, featured a red-foiled, wraparound cover by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, saw the return of writer Tom Sniegoski, and the debut of Harris "discovery" Buzz on pencils and inks. The premiere story was the two-part "Bloodshed," in which former members of the Unseelie Congress hire the assassin Hemorrhage to destroy Vampirella. Issue #2 concluded the "Bloodshed" storyline and introduced inker Joe Weems. Issue #3 had Vampi hunt down the monsters who hired Hemorrhage in "Payback

**Vampirella is a dynamite character who captured the hearts of readers in the '70s. The combination of horror and good art worked like magic.**



The seductive, stunning image of Vampirella has taken on an iconographic life of its own. Here, the comic book character is seen as a plastic model kit.

Time," which introduced Caesar Antomattei as penciler and set up "The Undead," a group of supernaturally gifted teens who break out of the labs of the shadowy Danse Macabre organization. Steve Crespo is the penciler for this issue, with Weems and Jason Minor inking. Issue #5 concluded "the Undead" storyline, as the three teens meet Vampi and free their genetic "father," vampire high-lord Mazarin. The penciler was Kirk Van Wormer, with inks by Art Nichols and another cover by John Snyder III. Issue #6 featured the return of Chelsea Cantrell in a one-shot guest appearance penciled by Hearn Cho and inked by Nichols. Adam Hughes returned to cover-art duty for that issue, with a bonus pin-up of the live Vampi model.

Harris has also published several collections of material from Vampi's Warren Publishing adventures. *Vampirella vs. the Cult of Chaos* recounted her early encounters with the demon-worshipping cult. *Vampirella: Transcending Time and Space*, featuring a cover by famed pinup artist Dave Stevens (*The Rocketeer*), collected her time-traveling and

inter-dimensional adventures. *Vampirella: A Scarlet Thirst* centered on stories dealing with Vampi's blood-drinking problems and featured another Stevens cover. The publisher has also made the original six-foot Vampi poster available again, as well as posters of Stevens' cover for *Vampirella: Transcending Time and Space* and the live model who has been making the rounds at the comics conventions.

Vampirella is a dynamite character who captured the hearts and minds of readers in the '70s. The combination of horror and good-girl art worked like magic, particularly the striking illustrations by José Gonzalez. With the current popularity of comic pinup art and the renewed interest in such pinup queens as Betty Page, a character like Vampirella seemed like a natural choice for a revival. Unfortunately, the efforts of Harris Comics have met with only partial success,

*Vampirella: Morning in America* suffered from a convoluted, uninspired script and rough, flat art (with the exception of the wonderful covers by William Kaluta). The first full-

color series started out promising, with great art by Small and Balent, and beautiful covers by Hughes. The "Dracula War" plot promised big things, but didn't deliver in the end. The less said about *Vampirella* #5, the better! *Vengeance of Vampirella* is still building on the foundations of *Morning in America* and *Vampi* #1-5, which is a major advantage, as well as a major flaw. By continuing the storylines set up in the previous volumes, Harris establishes the character as their own, and gives Vampi a sense of recent history. However, the new directions in which editor Melanie Crafford Chadwick and Sniegoski are moving the characters are mired in the conventions of typical '90s comics. By bringing in elements that decidedly reek of *X-Men*, *Spawn*, and other superhero/meta-human books, they are robbing Vampirella of what made her unique. The inconsistent quality of the artists for the book doesn't help, either. Vampi fans are accustomed to the gorgeous art of José Gonzalez, Esteban Maroto, Gonzalo Mazo, José Ortiz, and Rudy Nebres; they won't settle for the superhero cookie-cutter art on display in *Vengeance* #1-3. Steve Crespo's pencils and Joe Weems and Jason Minor's inks on *Vengeance* #4 are a vast improvement, even if the members of The Undead are still carbon-copy superheroes. Harris has big plans for Vampi, with a "Chains of Chaos" miniseries and a 1995 pin-up calendar out now, and trading cards from Topps due soon.

Warren Publishing didn't get *Vampirella* right on the first try, so we can forgive Harris Comics their early fumbles at reviving her. Female comics characters are very hot right now, particularly so-called "bad girls" like Catwoman, Lady Death and Poison Ivy. As the book picks up more momentum and the artists and writers get a better sense of how the characters should be handled, this new incarnation of Vampi could eventually outshine such popular, contemporary female characters as Wonder Woman, Shi, Rogue, Psylock, The Invisible Woman, and She-Hulk. □



# INESCAPABLE FUTURES

## Corporate punishment in futuristic prisons.

By Matthew F.  
Saunders

At a time when politicians are trying to convince us (despite statistics to the contrary) that crime is on the rise and that the best solution is to suspend the Bill of Rights, and while the Crime Bill is blundering through Congress and would-be censors play chicken-and-the-egg with First Amendment advocates regarding TV and movie violence, the number of movies focusing on futuristic prisons has increased. If art imitates life, what then is the significance of this current trend?

John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* (1981), non-genre films aside, can be viewed as the progenitor of this currently popular breed of prison films. Set in 1997, the film establishes this sub-genre's many conventions, especially the privatization/centralization of prisons and their inescapable nature, themes that run through all the recent movies. For example, the government has established Manhattan Island as the sole maximum security prison for the entire country. Surrounded by a 50-foot wall and paramilitary police force, monitored from the ironic Statue of Liberty Island Security Control station, and replete with mined waterways and bridges, the impenetrable island is America's criminal dumping ground.

Currently, prison overcrowding and taxpayer-sup-

### PRISONERS AS COMMODITIES

**The point, as with any dystopic film, is that life should not imitate art. If these films have anything to say, it's that solutions don't lie in the dehumanization of people.**



John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, with Lee Van Cleef and Tom Atkins (pictured), is the progenitor of the popular science fiction prison film.

ported incarceration are national concerns. Many communities that need new prisons balk at the idea of building them locally, and the notion of centralizing and isolating facilities is appealing—out of sight, out of mind, as long as you don't break the law. But rather than portraying the notion as idealistic, the films focus on dark futures and the concept's more dystopic qualities. In *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* and

1987's *THE RUNNING MAN*, for example, the prisons are not viewed as institutions of a benevolent government, but the results of re-formulated fascism.

In *NO ESCAPE*, *FORTRESS*, *DEADLOCK*, and *ALIEN<sup>3</sup>*, justice is privatized. Law enforcement still operates under the government's purview, but prison contracts are handled by corporations who view incarcerated crimi-

nals as commodities to be exploited for profit. The Men-Tel Corporation of *FORTRESS* practices financial inbreeding by employing prison labor to expand its titular prison to make room for more inmates. The Double-Y chromosome prisoners of Fiorina "Fury" 161 in *ALIEN<sup>3</sup>* are "employed" by the enigmatic Company to maintain the planet's mineral ore refinery.

*THE RUNNING MAN*'s game show, while in fact run by the government's police state, is presented under the auspices of commercial propaganda. Higher ratings don't translate so much into higher profit margins as they do into control of a disenfranchised population whose loyal viewership masks a manipulative form of crowd control. Those not participating in the game show, however, are still confined to work camps whose labor directly benefits their jailers.

This dehumanizing of prisoners into commodities, whether at the hands of governments or corporations, lends itself to a more dehumanized prison structure. While the prisoner-as-commodity convention is less true of *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* than the other films, it can be argued that the defense of Manhattan Island employs hundreds of policemen, seemingly supporting the argument that new prisons benefit communities by employing the local populace. What results from the prisoner-as-commodi-





In *NO ESCAPE*, Ray Liotta is the convicted murderer (left) who redeems himself by aiding the good-guy society that has emerged on the prison island (right).

ty philosophy is a god-like control of their lives and bodies, and the need to protect one's "investment."

This is where that philosophy intersects with the inescapable prison convention. If the prisoner is a product, then that product must be identified, protected and, if it becomes a liability, destroyed. In both *FORTRESS* and *ALIEN<sup>3</sup>* for example, citizens and prisoners respectively are bar-coded for individual identification—an erstwhile trademarking—as property of the government and the Company. The impenetrability of the prisons speaks to the need for product management. If control over one's product is lost (i.e., the prisoner escapes) then a subsequent loss in labor results must be recorded. And, if the product (prisoner) threatens the stability of the company/government and its other assets (prisoners/prison community), then it is prudent to let those same "protective" devices destroy the one to protect the many.

*ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* establishes the pattern for this inescapable prison convention when Snake Pliskens has two microscopic capsules injected into his arteries, and each subsequent film presents variations on this theme.

If Snake doesn't return with the president within 24 hours, the capsules will rupture his arteries. Spartan in *DEMOLITION MAN* and Richards in *THE RUNNING MAN* are both injected with tracers, neither of which is deadly unto themselves, but nonetheless serve to monitor their movements, Spartan in the allegorical social prison of San Angeles and Richards in the game show's arena.

Much like the non-deadly ankle bracelets worn by criminals under house arrest today, collars armed with explosives are worn by prisoners in *THE RUNNING MAN* and *DEADLOCK* such that, if zoned perimeters are crossed, pain and death result. The prison in *THE RUNNING MAN* employs simple sonic proximity sensors. *DEADLOCK*'s Camp Holiday, on the other hand, "wedlocks" a pair of inmates, such that upon crossing designated lines, one's unidentified wedlock partner also suffers or dies. A form of what philosopher Michel Foucault termed panoptic surveillance results, in which prisoners guard themselves, their fear and paranoia preventing their own escape.

*FORTRESS* combines the implanted tracer and collar concepts in the form of "in-

testinators," electronic devices which cause pain and death if the wrong lines are crossed. And even the crystal "lifeclock" hand implants in *LOGAN'S RUN*, which sentence citizens to death at age 30, can be considered in light of the fact that the domed city becomes a supposedly impenetrable prison for runners.

Given that the prisoners are often confined for life, the social patterns that emerge as a result of this prolonged incarceration are noteworthy. Much is made of the power hierarchies and social practices that occur in modern prisons. And, while *DEADLOCK*, *FORTRESS*, and *THE RUNNING MAN* (the labor camp, not the game show) offer little variation from these stereotypical norms, several of the films explore the formation of new societies within these prisons, societies that attempt to counter the inmates treatment as commodities and non-entities.

*ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* offers a chaotic mix, in which the prisoners have splintered into several gangs, each with their own standards and agendas. The two primary groups are a gang of underground cannibals who prey on the above-grounders for food, and a large mob-type gang

loyal to a leader named The Duke. Controlling much of the island as his "territory," The Duke is an erstwhile Don, complete with bodyguards and enforcers, who uses other prisoners to maintain control and mobilize escape attempts.

*ALIEN<sup>3</sup>* offers a religious sect of 25 prisoners, led by Dillon, who choose to remain behind when the Company closes the refinery. Overseen by two superintendents, they remain as a custodial staff who, through vows of celibacy and a xenophobic attitude toward outsiders, search for spiritual peace and unity. The Double-Y chromosome that contributed to their crimes and confinement now defines their need for isolation and spiritual salvation, and as such, the condition is a prison unto itself.

*NO ESCAPE* showcases Absalom, a primitive island prison for inmates too troublesome for the "regular" prison of Leviticus where exiled inmates align themselves with one of two groups, a la *Lord of the Flies*. The Outsiders, led by the eccentric Marek, are the Bad bad guys who lead barbaric lives and raid their rival inmates. The Insiders are the Good bad guys, led by the Father, who seek redemption through a semblance of civi-



# INESCAPABLE FUTURES

## REVIEW

*Civilization tries again, in another melange of post-apocalyptic clichés.*

### NEW EDEN

MCA Universal Home Video presents a Davis Entertainment Production. Produced by Harvey Frand. Executive produced by Jordan Davis. Directed by Alan Metzger. Screenplay written by Dan Gordon. Director of photography: Geoffrey Erb. 89 minutes. Rated R.

Addams.....Stephen Baldwin  
Lily.....Lisa Bonet  
Ares.....Tobin Bell  
Luke.....Abraham Verduzco  
Ashtarte.....Janet Hubert-Whittle  
Kynes.....Michael Bowen

by Lawrence Tetewsky

To convicted felons Addams and Kynes (Baldwin and Bowen) being exiled to a distant planet called Penal Zone 11 may have seemed like a chance for a new life, but this entry in the post-apocalypse prison planet genre ends up playing like a poor meshing of situations from STAR TREK, MAD MAX, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, and EARTH 2.

The meager exposition provided by the narration over the opening credits is mostly irrelevant to the story that follows: Addams was convicted as a political subversive, whereas Kynes was a mass murderer. Once they're abandoned on the planet and locked outside the walls of the spaceport, Kynes joins the local renegades, the Sand Pirates, and through treachery he becomes their leader.

Meanwhile, Addams is captured by a drifter, Ares (Bell), and eventually ends up with a tribe of nomadic migrants, the Scabs. Using his engineering skills to make an irrigation system out of discarded scrap for farming, Addams unwittingly sets up



the Scabs as targets for the Sand Pirates. After their enslavement, Addams seeks out Ares to instruct him in warfare to defend his people. Addams, who is essentially a pacifist, eventually must challenge Kynes to single combat, which rallies the Scabs' spirit to protect themselves and vanquish their foes.

Not much is very well thought out in the structuring or the setting and characters. For instance, food, water, and fuel are supposed to be extremely scarce commodities, yet the Sand Pirates ride horses and spend their leisure time aimlessly tooling around in their Land Rovers. The Scabs have domestic pets; a dog or two is occasionally seen in their camp. Ares initially captures Addams and sells him outright to the Scabs—as either a

storyteller or a meal—yet later he becomes a Yoda-like mentor-trainer to Addams, and then even aids the Scabs in defending their camp from attack.

Most of the plotting is also very pedestrian and predictable. Addams' romances with a tough yet sympathetic Scab named Lily (Bonet) happens by rote, even though he does just abandon her and her loyal son, Luke (Verduzco), without a word, in order to learn to fight. Lily and Luke regularly get themselves into trouble so that they must be rescued. Granted, she does win her fight with the Sand Pirates' queen, Ashtarte (Hubert-Whittle, resembling a credible ersatz Tina Turner from MAD MAX: BEYOND THUNDERDOME, but she got lucky.

The most puzzling question about NEW EDEN is this: What audience was this film originally intended for? At times, there is an attempt at a pseudo-Roddenberrian discourse on the virtue of peaceful resolution in the face of outright violence, but this dramatic philosophizing is immediately followed by mild, semi-gratuitous orgies of violence. Narratively, the story is structured like a television movie, with commercial fade-outs every 20 minutes, yet the movie carries an R-rating seal after the ending credits. The level of violence and sex, which need not go together, are strictly network standard. Yet NEW EDEN never aired on television, nor did it ever show up in theatres. It's easy to see why. □

lized living.

In each prison setting, and most profoundly in these internal societies, there are social divisions, varying social norms, and influential leaders. And while it could be argued that to varying degrees these societies are actually modern prison societies magnified several times to their extremes, the level of influence and interaction each has on the prison facilitators bears out their more dramatic underpinnings. Each of the wardens/central figureheads is either corrupt or circumstantially dependent on one or more of the prisoners beyond their normal use as commodities; prisoners are used to meet personal agendas and legitimate their own senses of authority.

In NO ESCAPE, the warden delights at the idea of the two groups destroying each other through constant warfare, and subsequently favors the Outsiders more aggressive behavior. Warden Holliday is motivated by greed in DEADLOCK, seeking to franchise Camp Holliday and recover the \$25 million in diamonds Frank Warren hid from his partners. Warden Poe in FORTRESS simply wishes to play voyeur to inmates' sexual dreams and sleep with Brennick's wife Karen, an act his genetically enhanced body renders impossible. Killian is drunk on his own ego and popularity as host of the THE RUNNING MAN, bargaining with Richards to increase his static ratings points. The superintendents in ALIEN<sup>3</sup> simply watch over the Company's interests, while Hawk in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK and Cocteau in DEMOLITION MAN find themselves dependent on Snake and Phoenix, respectively, for actions they can only direct by proxy.

Painting the wardens and corporate figureheads evil (the superintendents and Hawk's actions are not so much evil as less than ideal) reverses the roles of the prison and prisoner, granting the latter sympathy and casting him/her in the role of protagonist. While the intent of this reversal is apparent, to argue against privatized and centralized prisons, such com-





Elements of the prison sub-genre appear in other dystopic future films, such as the cryo-penitentiary and implanted tracking devices in **DEMOLITION MAN**.

mentary is actually undermined by each administrator's corruption. Rather than viewing the institution itself as corrupt, the focus is shifted to the individual, whose downfall becomes just as important as escape from the prison. And while on a certain level a personified enemy is more accessible dramatically, it cheapens the impact of the institution itself and each movie's statement(s) about it.

Ironically, then, it is with these same individuals that escape from these supposedly inescapable prisons lies. Snake's deal with Hauk guarantees his freedom if he

successfully rescues the president. The corrupt wardens in **FORTRESS, NO ESCAPE**, and **DEADLOCK** provide Brennick, Robbins, and Warren with avenues of escape as a direct result of their interaction with them. Cocoteau's release of Phoenix leads indirectly to Spartan's release. And Killian's overconfidence causes him to underestimate Richards and his fellow contestants' resourcefulness.

The prisoner-as-protagonist reversal is also noteworthy because it results, in several instances, in the indirect legitimization of criminal behavior.

Granted Richards and Spartan are innocent, but Snake, Robbins, Warren, and, technically, Brennick are all guilty, a fact downplayed in their confrontations with corrupt jailers. The characters' previous actions become benign by comparison, engaging the movies in an espousal of the motto "the lesser of two evils makes right." In an effort to legitimize their escape and stress the importance of individual freedom over commercial exploitation, the films inevitably disregard the legitimacy of each character's incarceration under the established law. Escape from prison, then, is no longer an in-

herently bad thing, as long as your jailers are worse than you.

The point each movie attempts to presuppose then, as with any dystopic film, is that life shouldn't imitate art. And if this collection of films has anything to say about society and crime—in spite of their inadvertent promotion of violence as problem-solver—it's that the solutions don't lie in the dehumanization of people or problems. What is unfortunate is that this point is made through the creation of anti-heroes and villains and not by focusing on the corrupt institutions themselves. □



**FORTRESS** emphasizes the prisoner-as-commodity theme, with the prisoners used as a workforce to expand the prison to make room for more prisoners.





# BRAINSCANNER

## Screenwriter Andrew Kevin Walker on upcoming projects.

By Anthony P. Montesano

Andrew Kevin Walker is a long way from Tower Records in New York City. After much toiling in the trade, the screenwriter of BRAINSCAN is now a hot commodity in Hollywood, with a string of genre projects in the works. In HIDEAWAY—for which Walker shares credit with RIVER'S EDGE scripter Neal Jimenez—Brett Leonard (THE LAWNMOWER MAN) directed Jeff Goldblum (JURASSIC PARK) as a man who, after drowning and being resuscitated, finds himself linked to a dark spirit from the 'other side' and to a dangerous killer threatening his family. In development at Paramount for producer Scott Rudin is a remake of THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW. Also upcoming is the hotly anticipated live-action version of the Marvel Comics sensation THE X-MEN, which Lauren Shuler-Donner and Richard Donner

BRAINSCAN screenwriter Walker: "I hope there's a certain basic morality to it, but mainly I wanted it to be fun."



(SUPERMAN) are set to produce for 20th Century-Fox.

Perhaps the most exciting project is SEVEN, a New Line Cinema property scheduled to be produced by Arnold Kopelson (WARLOCK) and directed by David Fincher (ALIEN 3), with Brad Pitt (INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE) and Morgan Freeman in the leads. "SEVEN is more of a detective story, but does have a horrific element to it," says Walker. "It's about a jaded cop and optimistic younger cop who are teamed together to search out a serial killer. The problem is that the serial killer's murders each contain a motif of one of the Seven Deadly Sins. The first sin is gluttony, and an obese man is forced to eat until his stomach bursts. The second one is greed and a wealthy man is held at gun point and forced to cut off 'a pound of his own flesh.' Lust is shocking—I don't know that I can even say it—you'd have to read the script. Lust is the most extreme and disturbing murder, specifically because the whole story is about an apathetic cop who doesn't feel he's any good. The action is set in a New York City-like place where there tends to be rampant apathy. There's a kind of realization that the serial killer, when they catch him, isn't literally going to be Satan, even though it is hard to imagine a human being doing this. One of the cops says, 'You have to realize that in the end, it's just going to be a guy who did it, and there won't really be any rhyme or reason or satisfaction in catching him.'"

Walker's first produced feature screenplay, BRAINSCAN, began with an idea by Brian

Owens, which Walker turned into a script. Six years later (three of them spent working at Tower Records), a knock came at the door, and Walker was pleasantly surprised to discover that BRAINSCAN was finally a go.

Between his version of the script and the final draft, a few things changed. The film's producer, Michel Roy, updated the technology from video to CD-ROM and—along with the makeup artists and effects team—conceived the movie's monster. "I didn't create the Trickster," says Walker. "When I wrote BRAINSCAN, the entity that antagonizes Michael was only a voice on the phone. It never named itself."

He also wrote "Well Cooked Hams," a particularly successful installment of HBO's TALES FROM THE CRYPT. The episode, directed by Elliot Silverstein (CAT BALLOU), stars Martin Sheen in three roles, including a master magician who possesses "The Box of Death," which gives him the ability to "die" on stage. The trick is stolen from him by a lesser magician

Walker's next produced screen credit will be on the adaptation of HIDEAWAY, a project he prefers not to discuss since it was rewritten by Neal Jimenez.



BRAINSCAN's Trickster takes over Michael and attacks his girlfriend.

(Billy Zane), who in typical TALES fashion gets his painful comeuppance, with acid dropped on his head.

"Sheen was extremely funny in the episode," says Walker. "He wore these wonderfully bizarre costumes. The first character he plays is a hunchback—the character was just nutty. He had these big mutton chop sideburns and this great German accent. That's the first thing that was produced with my name on it as writer. However, the producers on that show rewrite a lot, and the script was extremely rewritten."

Currently, Walker is working on what he calls "a really bizarre version of THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW. In this, the horseman is real. A lot of people think of 'Sleepy Hollow' as sort of a children's thing because of the Disney adaptation, which is a great animated version of the short story. But







This version of the "Trickster-Mesh" was replaced in post-production.

this one, and the story itself, I don't think are really for kids. This is particularly for the adult audience—but I should add that kids will love it too."

Having explored the nature of evil in all of his scripts to date, Walker feels the need to offer his audience a motivation for the evil in his films. So how does he explain the evil in *SLEEPY HOLLOW* and *SEVEN*? The former "is jam-packed with witches and all kinds of superstition. The Hessian Horseman that became the 'Headless Horseman' was a German mercenary soldier who came over during the Revolutionary War, and he was just the best at killing. I don't go into a lot of detail trying to explain why he particularly enjoyed murdering people on the battlefield. But when he returns, it's because somebody has his head, and that makes him very angry.

"It's harder to explain why a person becomes a serial killer," admits Walker. "Is it because Mommy spanked him once he was past the age of 18? You can easily fall into simplistic explanations for deep psychological problems. In *SEVEN*, it's kind of left unsaid about the serial killer because there's lots of evil out there and you're not always going to get the satisfaction of having any sort of understanding of why that is. That's one of the things that scares people the most about serial killers or a person who goes up in a tower and starts shooting at people. They're gonna ask 'Why?' but there's not gonna be any answer." □

# BRAINSCAN

## UNSEEN EFFECTS

*Mike Smithson's monster proved too horrifying for the filmmakers.*

By Anthony P. Montesano

"It was a heartbreak," says Mike Smithson (*DEEP SPACE NINE*) of the creature ultimately not seen in *BRAINSCAN*. During the climactic battle, Michael (Edward Furlong) and The Trickster (T. Rider Smith) mesh into one grotesque composite of flesh with four arms and heads. Smithson was asked to design this 'Trickster Mesh' by Steve Johnson (*THE STAND*), whose XFX shop handled the *BRAINSCAN* makeup effects.

The team had five weeks to conceive the creature. Classic Picasso-esque paintings were used as reference. "We wanted it to look like something caught in mid-flux," says Smithson. "We thought of it as a newly born creature, so we decided it should move gingerly, like a yearling that couldn't support its own weight. The legs and body were turned 180 degrees, like a mutant insect."

Smithson puts the finishing touches on the mechanical head for the Trickster, which contained mechanics that were constructed by Evan Branard.



Mike Smithson's unused makeup for the climactic battle between Michael (Edward Furlong) and the Trickster (T. Rider Smith), in which the two merge.

While Smithson was designing the life-sized body cast, Evan Branard (*THE BLOB*) worked on the mechanics. The elaborate mechanical puppet was finished in seven days. For filming, Charlie Powell was propped up through a bed with a full sleeve glove attached to a harness at his chest. Another

arm protruded from his chest and four fully articulated heads were designed over a helmet which he wore. "It was so life-like, Charlie was actually able to deliver a line of dialogue from one of the mouths," says Smithson.

However, director John Flynn (*BEST SELLER*) deemed the footage incongruous and opted to recreate the battle with more subtle digital effects. "It was a great monster," says Flynn. "But it belonged in another movie. All of a sudden, 85 minutes in, this prosthetic monster appears—it just didn't fit. The creation was horrific, but it was too real. We needed a bit more of a psychological feel to the scene."

Smithson opines, "I think Flynn had a problem with our creature because he isn't a horror director. I remember the reaction when we unveiled the monster on the set. The crew said 'Jesus Christ, what is it?'" □





# THE ENTITY

**Buried by big-budget competition, this film never found its audience.**

By Frederick C. Szabin

Strong female characters are a rarity in the horror genre, where nubile scream queens and stock victims make up most of the roles. So it was a longed-for break from the norm when, in the early 1980s, 20th Century-Fox released what could possibly be called a feminist horror film. *THE ENTITY* was derived from extensive interviews with a woman claiming to suffer violent attacks from a supernatural being. For author Frank DeFelitta, the bizarre events that formed the basis of his novel had begun in 1965.

At that time, DeFelitta was a successful maker of television documentaries. While on location filming *THE STATELY GHOSTS OF ENGLAND*, DeFelitta and his crew accidentally picked up on film what they

A dummy was created for an effect suggesting that Carla (Hershey) was abused by an invisible assailant.



These blue lightning bolts were one of the few flashy effects in *THE ENTITY*, a film that was out-glitzed at the boxoffice by the multi-million-dollar *POLTERGEIST*.

could only describe as an apparition. In 1970 he was invited by Thelma Moss of USC, to bring the tape and conduct a seminar. A few years later, he was approached by two of Dr. Moss's students, Barry Taft and Kerry Gaynor, who told DeFelitta of a woman apparently beset by attacks from a powerful, inhuman being. In October of 1975, DeFelitta met the woman and considered her to be "a phony," but Taft and Gaynor persisted.

DeFelitta, still considering the woman desperately ill, was invited to join Taft and Gaynor in the woman's house where, they claimed, they were now seeing the apparition itself. With his friend Dr. Morton Zarkov, of USC's film department, DeFelitta took a camera.

"I doubted anything would happen that night," DeFelitta recalls. "I thought it was a waste

of time, but I went there for the sake of the boys. It was a lark, and then it all happened." DeFelitta claims that the room around them seemed to explode in a flurry of what he calls "roman candles," and that the apparition itself soon appeared to the 17 people there, even though no camera could record it.

Now convinced, DeFelitta conducted extensive interviews with the woman for about a year, during which he claims, "Her house was a hotbed of poltergeist activity. The bathroom toilet would constantly flush. I brought in a plumber to find if it was a plumbing deficiency, and it wasn't. I saw lamps moving; I smelled horrible odors; I was enveloped by incredible cold. You have to understand the objectivity I bring to a story. I'm a documentary man to begin

with. I like to bring the opposition's view in; I like the balance. But I saw these things; I felt them; I smelled them. I'm convinced that this lady is beset by a creature from another dimension."

The interviews developed into a novel, which DeFelitta later adapted into a script. In the film story, Carla Moran (Barbara Hershey) is a beautiful single parent with two young daughters and a teenage son. While getting ready for bed, she smells an awful odor just before being struck in the face, pushed to the bed, and raped while almost smothered by a pillow. Her scream brings in her son Billy, who searches the house but finds nothing.

Carla takes the children to her friend Cindy to spend the night. The next morning, Carla admits to Cindy that she was raped by someone she couldn't see.

After another vicious attack, Carla sees Dr. Sneiderman (Ron Silver) and shows bruises and bite marks. The doctor is sure the marks are self-induced, caused by some early trauma that has returned in the form of severe anxiety and sexual desires manifesting themselves as "attacks."

Billy is injured when he tries to help Carla during another attack, but Sneiderman and his colleagues still believe her to be suffering from a mental illness strong enough to create a mass illusion that has affected her children. Carla goes to Cindy's as she and her husband get ready to go out for the evening, and the Entity comes in



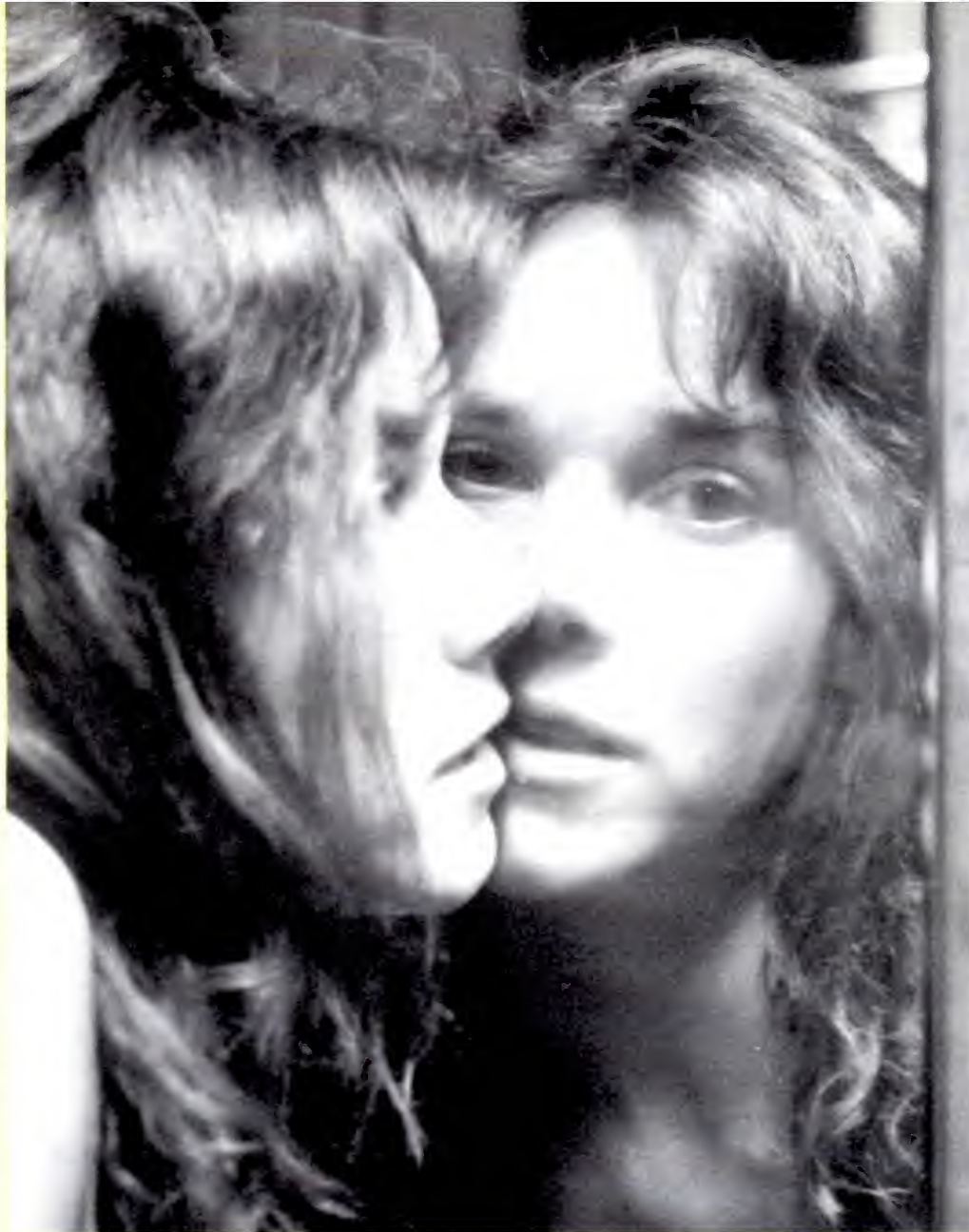
and destroys the living room through sheer brute force. Cindy returns to see it, finally giving Carla a witness.

While looking through a bookstore for material on psychic phenomena, Carla meets parapsychologists Gene Kraft and Joe Mehan, who reluctantly go to Carla's house after she describes the attacks. With special equipment, they spend the night, and the Entity appears in the form of bright arcs of lightning that soon fade, convincing Carla that she is now safe. Kraft and Mehan take their pictures of the Entity to their supervisor, Dr. Cooley, who is unsure of their proof and wants to be careful before going public.

After Carla is hospitalized from another attack, Cooley, Kraft, and Mehan tell her of their idea for isolating the Entity. They have built a replica of Carla's house in the University gym. This way, they hope to draw the Entity in and freeze it in liquid helium while taping the event with a series of video cameras. Despite Sneiderman's continued urgings, Carla refuses to leave the experiment.

After a quiet start, the Entity finally appears. It takes control of the helium tanks, sending blasts of the freezing liquid at Carla. She gets behind a protective glass partition, but it doesn't stand up against the pressure of the liquid helium. Tired of running and sick of being a victim, Carla faces the Entity, telling the creature that it can do whatever it wants to her, but it can't control her. In an apparent fit of anger, the Entity causes the helium tanks to explode, dousing the area with the deadly liquid. Sneiderman manages to pull Carla out just as the replica of her house collapses around them.

Although encased in ice by the downpour of liquid helium, the Entity bursts free. Sneiderman searches for Carla, but she has gone back to her house. The rooms are empty; all is quiet. The door suddenly slams shut, and Carla tells the Entity that it can't have her. A growling voice angrily mumbles an obscenity, letting Carla



The woman on whose experiences the story is supposedly based claims the Entity prevented the film's success. So why did he let the book reach the bestseller list?

know that it is far from finished with her.

In writing the book, DeFelitta took certain liberties, keeping within what he believes to be true. "The story of her, the children, and the events is true," he states. "The only part that is not is the last part. Taft and Gaynor sought and almost got the \$6 million necessary to have done the experiment in their lab. They were eager to subject her to the controlled environment. They wanted to build a replica of her house within the laboratory, and we talked about it at length. But they never got the money. In the book, I prognosticated what might have happened. That part is not true, but I felt since I said it was a novel, I had a license to create."

A bestseller, the book came to the attention of producer Michael Leone, who optioned it. Originally, DeFelitta wanted to direct the film in a documentary style, but Leone had other plans. The producer was so ecstatic about the project that, as DeFelitta recalls, "he wanted to go for broke." Leone's plan was to in-

volve top-flight directors and actors in a big budget production. Such respected filmmakers as Sidney Lumet, George Roy Hill, and Sidney Pollack were contacted. A year later, after numerous refusals from the directors and stars he had sought, Leone was still at the starting gate with what he believed would be his breakthrough picture.

The script eventually found its way to the agent of Sidney J. Furie, the Toronto-born director who won the British equivalent of the Academy Award in 1964 for *THE IPCRESS FILE*. Furie was impressed with the cinematic possibilities of what he essentially considered to be a good horror story. His interest in the subject matter, however, stopped there.

"I don't believe it," he states emphatically. "I believe the woman Frank interviewed believed it, but I don't. I don't think things have to be true to be good cinema. It was a script I read, based on a book that was interesting. In the horror genre the best film is *THE EX-*

*ORCIST*, and that certainly isn't true. There is no head on a little girl that can rotate 360°! What's the difference if it's true or not? Is it good cinema? Does it scare people? Does it interest them? You create your own reality in movies. I tried to make the film as believable as possible."

Furie viewed numerous horror films to get himself in the proper aesthetic mood, then changed or dropped certain elements of DeFelitta's script, starting with the Entity itself. In the book and original script, the Entity is described as Oriental in appearance, and it speaks to Carla in a constant barrage of obscene threats. In the director's view, that had to go.

"I felt it was stretching credulity to hear him talk, because if you, as an audience, could hear him, then why didn't everyone believe her? I felt the less you showed the more suspenseful the situation would be."

Another element altered to fit the director's tastes was the documentary style that DeFelitta thought would strengthen the film. Since Furie didn't believe the story in the first place, it's no surprise that he took a different approach. Instead, he worked with director of photography Stephen H. Burum to create an instantly claustrophobic atmosphere; tilted closeups and tight compositions within the frame give an expressionistic power to material that could easily have been grotesquely exploitative.

When it came to casting, the players proved to be more elusive to the producer than the Entity did to the parapsychologists. The supporting cast, including Ron Silver (*TIMECOP*) as Sneiderman and Alex Rocco as Carla's boyfriend, was no more difficult to find than usual, but casting the crucial lead role became a herculean task. Michael Leone's original choice was Jane Fonda, but she refused, as did many others.

"We were two or three weeks away from shooting, and we didn't have a star," DeFelitta elaborates. "Everyone Sidney wanted didn't want to do it. People he *didn't* want weren't willing. Even



# THE ENTITY

## DEFENSE

*"...a genuinely disturbing story..."*

By Fred Szebin

In the early 1980s filmmakers were being treated to a form of cinematic violence not previously encountered so consistently: throat slashings, impaling, exploding body parts, and splattering gore in rapid, desensitizing images. At this height of visceral excess came *THE ENTITY*, which returned to the basics of horror filmmaking by creating mood over mayhem and telling a genuinely unnerving story.

Sidney Furie's visualization of Frank DeFelitta's ghost story is saved on several levels from being a macho Hollywood wet dream. Among its strengths is DeFelitta's intelligent handling of a woman's supernatural dilemma. The film is uncompromising in its scenes of Carla being used by the Entity, and she certainly isn't enjoying it. Carla's reaction is anger, and it is an honest reaction.

The story is told from her point of view, giving the audience immediate recognition of her as an individual dealing with a supernatural

**Although obviously victimized, the character gathers internal reserve and fights her unseen attacker.**



Writer Frank DeFelitta's claim that his story is fact-based failed to convince us that "things go bump in the night" for real, but is the film itself any good?

rape. Carla Moran is first a victim going to others for help, but once science has failed her, it is her own inner strength and resolve that pushes the Entity back.

Certainly, *THE ENTITY* is unnerving. Any thinking male or female who doesn't have a view of the world at crotch level can only be incensed at the prospect of being abused and sexually molested. In this desperately sensitive era of political correctness, the very idea of *THE ENTITY*'s storyline must raise hackles to the point where many well-meaning individuals get out their paints and cardboard and picket for the "Betterment of All As We See It." *THE ENTITY* is above their heads.

They don't understand how a filmmaker and writer can take those very elements of social discomfort and use them to entertain—yes—but also to build a credible work that worms its way into our social consciousness and stabs at those very social and emotional controls that we hold so dear.

In DeFelitta's screenplay, Carla is a strong individual raising three children and working to better her-

self with an education. When the violent assault begins, she gathers an internal reserve and does all she can to fight against her unseen attacker—an image that is far removed from the surface view of a sexual puppet.

Without this force in Carla's character, *THE ENTITY* would certainly be a far lesser film and could border on soft porn. But Furie's direction makes the most of DeFelitta's screenplay by moving in tight on Carla's world once the attacks begin. There is virtually no extraneous space around any given scene. Extreme closeups and heightened foreground enhance tension which, above any possible exploitative elements of rape and violence, is the driving force of this story. Is Carla insane, or is she the tortured plaything of a vile being? When will the next attack occur? Will anyone believe her, and how do they fight something that they can't even see? These are the key elements to *THE ENTITY*'s success as an effective horror film, not "Where's the gore?" or "When are we going to see her naked?" □

Tuesday Weld turned it down! Genevieve Bujold said the script should be burned—she was so infuriated by it! Practically at the 11th hour, two ladies came in who had heard of the project. As far as I'm concerned, either of them would have been fine. One was Shirley Knight, and the other was Barbara Hershey. Barbara simply said, 'I understand this woman, and I understand your story. I truly believe.' At the last minute, in walks this angel, and she's perfect."

A highly regarded actress, Hershey went to an audition when she was a student at Hollywood High School, signed with an agent, and became a regular on the western series *THE MONROES*. She made her feature debut in *WITH SIX YOU GET EGGROLL*, with Doris Day and Brian Keith. Her breakthrough was playing the title role in Martin Scorsese's debut *BOXCAR BERTHA*, with David Carradine. She followed that with *THE STUNT MAN*, *THE RIGHT STUFF*, and *HANNAH AND HER SISTERS*.

*THE ENTITY* began production in 1981 with an \$8 million budget and an unheard of 18-week shooting schedule. Deciding to forego elaborate special effects, Furie relied mostly on his camera to give the film a unique look, but he turned to Stan Winston (*JURASSIC PARK*) for the more bizarre action. Winston and his crew designed and built a life-like dummy that gives the impression of Carla's body being fondled by invisible hands.

Hershey refused to appear nude, so a full-body cast was made of her stand-in and built from the neck down. It was set on a false bed with enough room for the actress to prop herself under the dummy while the effects crew labored with a series of levers and pulleys which enabled them to move the entire body, one or both breasts, or just a nipple.

"When we took our first Polaroid," says Furie, "we could not believe our eyes. It was so real that we had to cut out half of what we shot, maybe more. In fact, it was so real we used to keep a sheet over the dummy when we weren't filming. Once, I lay down with the dummy, and Barbara and I had a





picture taken. I went home, showed my wife the snapshot and said, 'See what I was doing today?' Everyone had a ball during those scenes."

Another crucial effect involved a less-than-subtle machine known as the air cannon. Created by Joe Lombardi, whose explosive effects can be seen in APOCALYPSE NOW, the cannon was brought in when Furie didn't know what to do with a particular scene—the trashing of Cindy's living room by the invisible Entity. The cannon would, as the effects man put it, "shoot the shit out of the set." Getting only one take, it was more than enough to convey the power of the Entity as it turned a comfortable, middle-class living room into a pile of debris. The helium container that goes wild after the Entity takes control of it was the air cannon constructed on a track that enabled it to move freely.

When the liquid helium tank explodes, the Entity is encased in a huge block of ice, sculpted in miniature by William Cruse and George Risko and blown up in slow motion. While the camera was filming the gym, the ice sculpture at the same moment was being reflected onto the lens of the camera through a prism to create an impressive on-set effect.

Everything seemed to be going well during the shoot, and success seemed inevitable. But the film's backers, American Cinema Productions, went bankrupt during production. The picture reverted to the Bankers Trust of New York, who wanted to make a pack-

## DIRECTORIAL SKEPTICISM

**"I don't believe it," states Sidney J. Furie. "What's the difference if it's true or not? Is it good cinema? Does it scare people? You create your own reality in movies."**



Although insisting that the rest of the story is true, even DeFelitta admits that the climactic attempt to freeze the Entity with liquid helium was fictitious.

age deal with two other films: I, THE JURY and TOUGH ENOUGH. Screenings were held, and every major studio made a bid for THE ENTITY, but the bank would not release it unless the other two films were bought as well. It soon became a race against time that THE ENTITY was destined to lose.

"We told the bank that we must come out before POLTERGEIST, because we'd be fresher," says Furie. "They were being businessmen and forgetting that movies are perishable goods, just like fruit and

vegetables."

The Tobe Hooper-Spielberg chiller had the crew of THE ENTITY immediately concerned. DeFelitta is certain that someone involved with POLTERGEIST had read his original novel. The two stories do have similarities. In both, a family harassed by the spirit world calls in a woman and her two assistants to fight the evil. There was also a scene in POLTERGEIST's original print that depicted an invisible being raping JoBeth Williams' character. The scene was cut after DeFelitta proposed a lawsuit.

In February 1982, 20th Century-Fox bought the film package from Banker's Trust, but decided to postpone THE ENTITY's release until advance publicity could be generated. After the news reached Spielberg's offices, they requested to see the film.

"Stupidly," says DeFelitta, "someone gave it to them. They saw my picture and got shook up, because two such pictures could have murdered each other. They pressed their production ahead to beat us to the theatres, forcing special effects and dubbing into a day and night operation."

POLTERGEIST was released in June 1982 while THE ENTITY sat on the shelf in a 20th Century-Fox film vault. Previous to POLTERGEIST'S release, THE ENTITY was given two sneak previews. Audience response was tremendous, with up to 95% giving the film a thumbs up. After POLTERGEIST proved successful, THE ENTITY was given more previews, this time garnering only 40% approval. The general comment was that THE ENTITY didn't have the glitz, flash, and startling effects that packed the Spielberg production.

"POLTERGEIST eroded away any potential THE ENTITY may have had," says DeFelitta. "Typically, Fox fucked up. I explained my fears to them in a very long memo saying, 'By all means come out before POLTERGEIST, or you'll be damning this picture to the cellar.' I never received an answer. I think Fox missed out of \$30 million in income on the film."

By February 1983, nearly a year after being in a releasable form, 20th Century-Fox finally let THE ENTITY loose. It opened promisingly, with \$4.2 million in its first week. But business dropped quickly, and the film was pulled from theatres. Despite being picketed in London by a women's group who found the subject matter offensive, THE ENTITY was a great success abroad.

In America, the film finally found an audience on home video. Many women found its story of a single parent confronting an all-encompassing evil to be a refreshing change from the sexy victim cliché portrayed in slasher movies.

Supposedly, the woman on whose experiences the story is based preferred the book, because the film didn't go far enough in its portrayal of the attacks she claims to have suffered. She also claims that the Entity itself liked neither the novel nor the movie and wasn't about to let the latter succeed. American Cinema Productions went bankrupt during production; and the film, for no good reason, had to wait nine months for a proper release, only to discover that it had been outspooked by another picture.

You decide. □

Stan Winston's makeup effects crew works on the mold of the life-size body.





# Dark Side of the Full Moon

**Charles Band's own brand name horror label didn't earn brand name loyalty.**

*By Jay Stevenson*

It looks as if the Full Moon is undergoing a lunar eclipse, even if only a partial one. The Charles Band company, a supplier of direct-to-video fare distributed by Paramount, ran into some trouble, which may make it difficult for the producer to live up to his promise of "200 movies by the year 2000."

"I think that the pictures were in too many cases not commercial and not good enough and not successful enough for their intended market," says effects expert Dave Allen, whose directorial effort *PRIMEVALS* finds itself in post-production limbo now that Paramount has cut off funding to Band.

"There may have been some creative bookkeeping involved, I suspect, where certain old obligations were paid with new money." (According to other sources at Full Moon, Paramount discovered that money had been paid toward the completion of films that had not, in fact, been initiated.) "That probably caused them to look at the situation with very mixed feelings," says Allen. "The craven side of their business, which is not to be underestimated at that studio, probably admired the chutzpa; the other side was probably alarmed at not having the goods delivered."

Adds director Richard Elfman (*SHRUNKEN HEADS*), "He's an enigmatic fellow. One



Producer Charles Band sits surrounded by creatures from his Full Moon productions.

side of him is very charming, ballsy, and innovative, with all this energy. You have to give him credit for all he's created. Then another side really does business in a crazy way, so you could see it coming. He's so penny-wise, pound-foolish that he spends double what he needs to on everything."

Despite the problems, Paramount seems interested in staying in business with Band on some level, if only because many of his films have been profitable. "Of course, Charlie has enough successful product through them that, like anyone who's had even one hit, you can milk that for a long time," says Allen. "I think they extended him considerable benefit of the doubt, and I

know that they have brought new partners into the contract with Paramount, new money. I think that Charlie has had to relinquish certain rights. Beyond this, the details don't concern me; I am concerned with completing *PRIMEVALS*."

The current Charles Band story has roots that go back several years. His Empire Pictures once supplied theatres with low-budget horror and science-fiction films, such as *TRANCERS* (directed by Band himself) and Stuart Gordon's *REANIMATOR*—until the shifting realities of the marketplace made it too difficult for independent producers to compete with major studios for theatrical distribution, at which point Empire went bankrupt.

However, like a Phoenix arising from its own ashes, Band returned with a new company and a new approach. Full Moon would produce films for video release only, but the "direct-to-video" label would be treated as an asset rather than a liability. Instead of unceremoniously dumping the cassettes onto shelves, Full Moon and Paramount actively promoted the titles with aggressive advertising and merchandising tie-ins.

"Theatrical is insignificant," Band declared at the time. "So many revenue streams are still being referred to as 'ancillary' markets; but, except for a few colossal hits, most revenue is derived from video, television, and cable."

In a sense, Band was trying—quite successfully—to be the proverbial big fish in a small pond, churning out product which could not compete in the theatrical marketplace but which often featured noticeably better production values than other DTV releases. The average Full Moon budget was in the neighborhood of a few million dollars, and the largest (for Gordon's *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM*) was \$6 million. Compare this to the \$1 or 2 million accorded by Roger Corman to his *Concorde/New Horizons* productions.

Of the inevitable comparisons to Corman, Band was somewhat dismissive, though not entirely. "I guess it's the only comparison you'd want to





TRANCERS IV—like many Band series, the sequels continue past all endurance.

make," he admitted, "though the world is so much different from when Roger was doing his thing. And the one thing Roger wasn't doing, because it didn't make sense at that time, is what we're doing with the label of Full Moon. I also hope and aspire to make pictures that aren't necessarily a lot more expensive but that continue to improve. Everybody has their 'golden stretch,' and I hope I haven't hit mine yet."

With his successful deal at Paramount, Band did indeed seem to have hit his "golden stretch." He said, "Full Moon has a defined mission in terms of the pictures it's making. If you're trying to build a brand label, it's a problem if you don't stay true to the formula. Empire did not do that. Also, during the Empire years, I was so concerned with the business of running the company that very little of my time was spent at what, I think, I do best and enjoy most: making movies. I made a vow to myself not to repeat that with Full Moon. I set it up in such a way that I have a lot of freedom to put most of my energy into the design and creation of the films."

Despite this optimism, trouble had been brewing in paradise, though one had to be looking closely to notice. Contrary to Band's insistence that theatrical revenues are insignificant today and that platform releasing did little to improve video viability, it had become clear that theatrical distribution, even if not profitable in and of itself, can increase video sales and rentals. Paramount Pic-

tures, when promoting the video release of the lackluster theatrical performer HELL-RAISER IV, were pleased to point out that a meager \$12 million domestic gross would insure tremendous success in the video market, based on their previous experience with PET SEMATARY 2, another weak theatrical entry that did great video business. Later, when Band's PREHYSTERIA cashed in on the JURASSIC PARK-induced dinosaur craze to become the biggest DTV hit ever, the success was somewhat muted after Roger Corman's rival effort, CARNO-SAUR, used a regional theatrical release (netting merely \$2 million) to boost video sales well past Band's film.

Since then, Band had reversed his earlier statements about the pointlessness of domestic distribution and announced his "first theatrical release," a sobriquet applied variously to the cultish SHRUNK-

The black comedy DARK ANGEL, written by SHRUNKEN HEADS' Matthew Bright, turned out to be one of Full Moon's better efforts, though released to little acclaim.



EN HEADS and the sci-fi-Western OBLIVION (this despite PIT AND THE PENDULUM'S one-week platform run in theatres four years ago).

By this time, however, the glow had already worn off the Full Moon brand name. Part of the problem was that Band's hands-on approach didn't necessarily result in better films; in fact, his best production by far is PIT AND THE PENDULUM, the one that bears not the ubiquitous credit "based on an idea by Charles Band" but the personal imprint of its director. The result is that, after the recent trouble, Paramount wants to continue the Moonbeam line, which releases family-oriented PG fare like DRAGON WORLD, while the fate of Full Moon (along with Torchlight, Band's other subsidiary label, which was supposed to supply adult, erotic-thriller type material) is very much up in the air.

"Apparently, when they looked at the pictures, they came to the conclusion that the R-rated stuff was not doing so well, while the Moonbeam product was doing exceptionally well," explains Allen. "I think you have to except out of that equation the PUPPET-MASTER films, which seem to have a fairly consistent following. I think everybody's sick of them, but they're such proven moneymakers that they keep grinding them out. Apart from that, DARK ANGEL and the later SUBSPECIES have not been doing so well. Of course, heaven forbid that they should look at whether the films are any good; they just like to tar the whole genre and say 'Hor-



OBLIVION lost the race to be Full Moon's first theatrical release.

ror films aren't making money!"

Paramount still owns all video rights to completed Full Moon productions and is releasing the hopeless OBLIVION, its unnecessary sequel OBLIVION II, and SHRUNKEN HEADS. (Elfman himself ended up bankrolling a limited midnight run of the latter, starting November 25 in Los Angeles. "It helps me with my next project," he explains. "If I break even, that's all I ask.")

The future of uncompleted projects remains uncertain, as they wait for the completion bond company to put up money for post-production. "As far as PRIMEVALS is concerned, this is probably the odyssey of all time," says Allen, who had been trying to get the project off the ground for two decades. "We have achieved a very important plateau. The film was, all things considered, pretty lavishly produced, compared to any picture that's ever come out of there. Not that it shouldn't have been much better; in preparation of sets and certain things, it was a little bit dubious. It's played very earnestly. When we get it all assembled, I think it could be quite arresting. Then of course there's the whole aspect of visual effects, which could take another year." □





## The actress

By Steve Biodrowski

When the phrase "Scream Queen" was originally coined, it referred to someone who, through either accident or design, had established a successful career in horror films. In a strange etymological evolution, the phrase has now come to mean just about any struggling (usually out-of-work) actress who appears at a science-fiction convention to sign photographs of herself. What's sad about this phenomenon is that it bestows cult status on the undeserving, while at the same time ignoring worthier talent doing consistently good work in the genre. A good example of the latter is Lisa Blount. While avoiding the scream queen label, the actress has given a string of fine performances in a variety of fantastic films and TV shows: *DEAD AND BURIED*, *RADIOACTIVE DREAMS*, *THE HITCHHIKER*, *PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, and most recently *NEEDFUL THINGS*.

The Arkansas native was discovered at the age of 17 by James Bridges, the talented screenwriter of *COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT* who had gone on to establish a substantial directing career (*CHINA SYNDROME*, *URBAN COWBOY*, *BRIGHT LIGHTS*, *BIG CITY*) before his death two years ago. "He had come to Arkansas to shoot an autobiographical piece, but he didn't have his leading lady," recalls Blount. "He certainly did not intend to cast her out of Arkansas; they were still trying to find an actress in Hollywood. I literally sat on the doorstep in his motel for days until he would agree to see me—it was the only way they could get rid of me."

Of the strenuous action in horror films, Lisa Blount says, "I'm challenged by it. I guess there's just this macho side of me." Even so, the striking actress opted to emphasize a more feminine side when posing in fashion designer Lisa Temming's fatal attire for our Haunt Couture feature.



# ISA BLOUNT

reveals the horror of making horror movies.

The film was titled **9/30/55**, the date of the death of James Dean, whose career had had a tremendous impact on Bridges. Despite its realistic tone, the film was Blount's first brush with the genre, due to a quirk of her character, "a girl from the wrong side of the tracks who thought she was Vampira. When James Dean died, she did not know what to do, so she got herself dressed up as Vampira, because she knew Dean hung out with her. It's so poignant, so pitiful, to see these kids try to make sense out of the death of this gigantic persona."

Unfortunately, the film never found its audience. "Universal didn't know what to do with it; they gave it one of those quickie releases. It's brilliant, but it was way ahead of its time; I've heard some people call it the **BREAKFAST CLUB** of its era, because it was a cast of unknowns who went on to do very well: Dennis Quaid, Richard Thomas, Dennis Christopher."

After the location work, the actress moved West to shoot the interiors. "Coming to Hollywood caught me by surprise," she recounts. "I had left high school real young, because I planned on graduating [college] by the time I was eighteen, and I never really intended to move to Hollywood. Most kids in that part of the country who want to become actors go to New York, which is where I thought I would go. But I had an opportunity to meet people, so I came out here and eventually made it my home."

Blount's second feature was **DEAD AND BURIED** (1981), written and produced by Ron Shusett (who had assisted Dan O'Bannon on the story for **ALIEN**) and directed by Gary Sherman (**DEATH-**



Above: Blount's **PRINCE OF DARKNESS** character reappeared in the **CARRIE**-type jolt ending (Inset). Below: She was one of the ill-fated astronauts (left) in **NIGHTFLYERS**.





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Blount (seen above, posing out of character) calls *RADIOACTIVE DREAMS* "a good film that did not get its day."

LINE). "In my opinion, it was one of the better horror films ever made, structurally," claims the actress. "Every red herring pays off. It's not a gory movie; it's a horror movie. I played a reanimated person—essentially, a Barbie doll. I was young and cute enough at the time to pull it off."

Her first horror film was also the first of many behind-the-scenes horror stories, which

sometimes wound up being more frightening than the final results. "My experience of making horror films is that they're very difficult and painful. You scream a lot and end up scantily clad in a cold environment constantly," she explains. "For instance, in *DEAD AND BURIED*, we had a shot of me nude in the water, off the coast of Mendocino, below freezing. We decided that

we would not show breasts, so I had pasties on. I got serious hypothermia, got back where it was warm, and yanked the pasties off—along with all this skin that was attached. And they couldn't even use the footage because I was blue and my teeth were chattering too bad. We had to reshoot that out in Malibu.

"My other horror story of a horror film was working for

John Carpenter on *PRINCE OF DARKNESS*," she continues, referring to the director's underrated 1987 horror effort, which restated the old Good-vs-Evil theme in science-fiction jargon. "I jump through a mirror and save the world from the Devil at the end of the movie. Well, the way it was shot was in a swimming pool, covered with a piece of plexiglass, and the camera was looking straight down as I was reaching toward safety. This involved learning to scuba dive. Since it was only the bottom of a pool, nobody saw much need to give me much instruction, so in the shallow end I learned how to breathe, and they weighted me down with 40 pounds so I would not float. It was all done with light cues, because they put ink in the water, so it was dark down there. They would flash a light; I would take away my equipment, do my scream, blow all the air out of my lungs, then pick up the diving mask and walk out. What they failed to tell me is you should always blow into your mask before inhaling, because water goes into the air line. So I inhaled water straight into my lungs. I couldn't float to the top, because it was covered with plexiglass. There was a diver down there, and he came to guide me to the shallow end. I couldn't tell him I was drowning, because it was pitch black. He was walking me slowly out

Blount's role as Cora Rusk, who fantasizes about Elvis, was mostly cut from *NEEDFUL THINGS*, though fleeting images remain, such as the chainsaw shot.





of the pool, while I was fighting the urge to inhale. The only thing I could do was kick him as hard as I could to get him out of my way so I could scramble out on my own. I puked and coughed water for days. And in the movie the shot is just four seconds of nothing particularly outstanding, and you just go, 'Well, I guess it was worth it.' Nowadays, when I see good stunt work, boy, do I appreciate it!"

**WHAT WAITS BELOW** (1983) is an uneven Sandy Frank production about a joint scientific-military expedition that unearths a lost Lemurian civilization in the depths of a bottomless cavern. Fortunately, the film is helped by a talented cast, including Blount, Robert Powell (Ken Russell's *TOMMY*), and Richard Johnson (*THE HAUNTING*). Director Don Sharp is well remembered for Hammer's *KISS OF THE VAMPIRE* (1962, a.k.a. *KISS OF EVIL*), but like many of his later efforts, this fails to fulfill his early promise.

The filming involved another behind-the-scenes horror story, although in this case Blount was not one of the unfortunate victims of the misadventure. "We were down about three miles deep in a cave," the actress recalls. "We would go into the caverns before dawn, stay there all day, and come out at night, so we never saw the sunlight, except for Sunday. At one point, I was captured and tied up on a little rise inside the cavern. All the extras, as the Lemurians, were out in front of me, and I watched all these people just start silently falling over, fainting, as this wave of carbon monoxide came at them. All hell broke loose. We had little golf carts for transportation, and it was an immediate emergency situation of getting out, but these carts didn't go that fast. We had very sick people, and it was a matter of determining who got in the first car out—youngest ones first. It was just total chaos. There were sixty people who went to the hospital. I was fortunate; I may have gotten some of it, but it didn't bother me. As far as I know, nobody was permanently injured. It was just one

**“My experience making horror films is that they’re very difficult and painful,” says Blount. “You scream a lot and end up scantily clad in a cold environment.”**



In *DEAD AND BURIED*, Blount played "a reanimated person, essentially a Barbie doll," who poses as a nurse (above) and lures men to their death (below).



of those technical problems where the generator running everything backed up and started shooting fumes back into the cave. We had to shut down for a few days because of that, but we got through it."

Along with Catherine Mary Stewart, Blount was one of the acting ensemble playing pas-

sengers aboard 1985's *NIGHT-FLYERS*, a sort of "PSYCHO in a Spaceship" story, with a visual look inspired by *ALIEN*. The script was based on the excellent novella by George R. R. Martin, but the \$3.5-million film didn't do justice to its source. "That was fun," says Blount. "It wasn't a great movie, but I

thought it ended up looking good. My problem was it was just a formula script; the actors did everything they could with it, but you just need a good script."

If drowning and asphyxiation were her other film horrors, in this case the treachery of portraying an airless zero-gravity environment proved to be the greatest difficulty. "Flying hurts a lot," she says. "You're rigged up forever, and they can't let you down, so you get little welts. I mean like, 'It's bleeding—now can I come down?' They had us in these space suits with the bubble-head and tubes. Well, whoever built these things forgot we actually had to live in them. The tube was solid, so the only way you could breathe was to lift up the visor, grab some air, then flip it down. So you do your scene and hope you don't faint before you get your dialogue out, then lift it up to breathe again. So it was not the best way to work."

Less harrowing was her role in *RADIOACTIVE DREAMS*, a 1986 film which she terms "pure fun." The low-budget effort is one of many from director Albert Pyun (*CYBORG*). "I loved this movie," the actress proclaims. "Now I think this was a good film that did not get its day but that was a blast."

Filming still had its share of pain, but in this case it was part of the characterization. "I had to play a woman disguised as a man who later reveals herself to be a woman," she says. "I worked out and thought I was in good shape. Then I went to costuming, and they gave me a jacket with fake muscles. My skinny little muscles were not quite what they had in mind, so there I was sweating to death in a 50-pound jacket. But we had a good time on that. They gave me this machine gun that was actually in production—at one time, the L.A.P.D. had considered it. But it kicked too much; it was unpredictable. The special effects people got hold of one, so I got to use it to wipe out about forty people. There was one of those long dolly moves, and because of the way the shot was designed, it just did not look right to put it



against my shoulder, so I had to do it free-handed, straight out, and this thing kicked so bad that most people would pull the trigger and go flying fifty feet backwards! I worked and worked with it till I got it to where I could shoot and it looked good. I loved that stuff. It's not what you call one of your finer points of method acting, but that's what acting really comes down to so often: learning how to use a prop. I've done a lot of stuff with guns, and I go to an annual celebrity shoot now. It's kind of a hobby for me; it actually came out of working with guns in movies and then saying, 'Hell, I better learn this shit for real.' It just looks better if you know what you're doing. I'm really good with car work, too. I'm challenged by 'You're going to fly over this embankment and hit this mark.' If I can do it, I'll do it; if I can't, I let the stuntman. I guess there's just this macho side of me, but I get a kick out of it."

Next up was a piece of exploitation cinema from Italian director Ruggero Deodato, who has managed to earn a certain cult status from films with charming titles like *CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST*. In *CUT AND RUN*, Blount co-starred with perennial villain Richard Lynch, who played a charismatic Jim Jones-type charac-

In her film debut, 9/30/55, Blount played "a girl from the wrong side of the tracks" who imitated Vampira.



**“I’ve worked a lot with guns. It’s not one of your finer points of method acting, but that’s what acting comes down to so often: learning how to use a prop.”**



Blount's next bloody screen appearance will be of the victim variety in the just-completed *STALK*, from Canadian producer Pierre David (*SCANNERS*).

ter operating a cocaine ring deep in the jungle. Location filming in Venezuela "was without a doubt the roughest thing that ever happened to me," according to the actress. "I swam in the river, not by choice but because I had to in the movie, with electric eels and piranha. I got my hand sliced up with rusty nails, jumping in and out of canoes, and got stung by things that god only knows what they were. But it was fun, and I survived it."

What the actress almost did not survive was the monsoon season. "We were shooting out in the middle of the Amazon, in this little place where they could land a plane, and we overshot one day. The monsoon was coming, and we were going to spend the night there with no food and no shelter. We had two planes, and one pilot—he was a local—said, 'I can fly out of this; if anybody wants to come with

me, I've got three seats.' I hopped in, and we were tossed around in the air like a piece of paper. It was just amazing—the force of nature. There was absolutely no doubt that we were going to be dying. We ended up making an emergency landing in a village of hammock-makers, and these people were so wonderful. They were natives who did the best they could to take care of us until the next day, when we were rescued."

Blount's filmography runs the gamut from box office blockbuster to cult flick. One of the more obscure examples of the latter is *FEMME FATALE*. "I got to play the most wonderful character," she enthuses, "a lesbian bad filmmaker who considered herself quite the artist. It's a great cast: Billy Zane is brilliant in it, and Lisa Zane is great. She had to play this character with eight different multiple personalities, and I

was her jealous lover. I was chasing her down, trying to still make bad movies, and clobbering the wrong people. It was a hilarious black comedy with a real kind of gruesome edge to it. That was really the take we ended up going with in the whole movie, and it was a good thing. Done any other way it just would have been too stupid, but when everybody doing the movie is in on the joke, you could get it, with your tongue in your cheek. So that's the way we did it, and it was so much fun. I was there for a number of screenings for the sci-fi community, and people went nuts over this thing."

In an episode of HBO's *THE HITCHHIKER* series, Blount played a rock singer with a split personality. "She was in touch with who she really was, and she had this rock-n-roll persona. At one point, she divides and becomes in the physical world two people, so we got to do some of that split-screen stuff, where I yell at myself a lot. I was really disappointed in my performance, because I'd never done it before, and it was very difficult to get the timing right. People have done that in movies very often, and boy I'm really amazed when I see somebody do that well, because I tried it and it's harder than it looks. There are no special courses in split-screen acting, but there should be."

Blount's most recent genre performance, in the Castle Rock adaptation of *NEEDFUL THINGS* (1993), went almost unseen, due to post-production editing. "Any Stephen King fan would know that Cora Rusk is an integral character in the novel; in the script she was also integral, so I went to Canada and froze my butt off for three months. Cora's fantasy was Elvis Presley. She goes to the shop and buys a bust of Elvis, comes home and communicates. We did not do any flashbacks to Graceland or anything; it was all done with me in the bed, with Elvis just talking and singing. Then Mr. Gaunt (Max Von Sydow) calls, and tells her that he can make Elvis do more than sing. She will do anything for this, so she is given her Devil's deed and gets what she wants; then she



goes crazy. I had a scene with J.P. Walsh that was absolutely wonderful—I was sitting in a bar, having a conversation, completely out of my mind. They gave me all my material on a videocassette: I'm running around in a see-through negligee in the dead of winter with little booties like house slippers, this tacky old coat, Elvis shades, and kind of a Priscilla Presley hairdo from the '60s.

"Because there are so many characters, it was a bit overwritten and perhaps a bit overshoot—the director's first cut was over three hours," Blount continues. "It finally got down to Castle Rock saying to Frazer Heston, 'You can either cut it down, or we won't release it.' He called me up and said he did everything possible to keep Cora in. But when it came time to edit, it was a lot easier to take out Cora, because I had so little contact with the other characters—my work was with Elvis in bed. I was very disappointed. There is certainly no blame to be put on anybody, but it hurt, because you like to have your work seen."

More recently, Blount played the murder victim in a horrific true-life story, a television movie called *MURDER BETWEEN FRIENDS*. "It was interesting because I have never come across anything like this after all these years of acting," she recounts. "The filmmakers had in their possession documents from the court. For example, they knew where the murder weapon, a baseball bat, was in the room; they knew there was a bloody handprint on one wall. There were no witnesses to what actually occurred, so the actors had to block out the scene and go through the motions that would have to happen for the bat to end up there and for her to still be alive to crawl over and put the hand print on the wall at this particular place. Going through that was at first sort of technical, but there came a moment that was not so technical for me at all. It was so real to me that this had occurred to a human being. We were very aware all the way through that these were



In the lost civilization tale *WHAT WAITS BELOW*, Blount appeared with Robert Powell and Richard Johnson.

real people; it was not a fictional situation, and we gave it all due respect. But to be on the floor, crawling—even though the bat was rubber, it still hurts when it hits you—and to have this man towering over me going through the motions of bludgeoning me was one of the most hideous experiences. I just got sick. It was like the line of reality had been crossed."

Despite her numerous genre appearances, Blount has managed to avoid being typecast as a horror movie scream queen, amassing an impressive number of mainstream credits. After *9/30/55*, she worked with Dennis Quaid twice more, in *FLESH AND BONE*, with James Caan and Meg Foster, and in *GREAT BALLS OF FIRE*, the story of Jerry Lee Lewis. ("I played his mother-in-law, which was funny, because he's a number of years older than I am. This was in fact pretty much the situation in reality.") She also ap-

peared with Rutger Hauer (*BLADE RUNNER*) in *BLIND FURY*, a take-off on the well-loved Japanese Zatoichi series, about a blind samurai swordsman. The actress played "a cocktail waitress who got hoodwinked and dragged along into this situation. She could not figure out whose side she was on for the longest time, but in the end she goes for the right side. It was fun, and Rutger's great. That's a well-made movie, directed by Philip Noyce. I think it's the only film I think he's done that wasn't a huge success."

But of course, the film that brought the actress the most attention was *AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN*—a fact she regards somewhat ambivalently. "It gave me an opportunity that so few actors get, to be in a movie that broke box office records, that's been seen by damn near every person on the face of the Earth,"

she reflects. "I was lucky to get that, and I have a kind of love-hate relationship with the movie now, because I've been associated with it for so long. When I read something in a magazine about Richard Gere or Debra Winger, it will say *AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN* next to it; it's like nobody can shake this movie. It became my middle name: 'Lisa (AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN) Blount.' For the longest time, my goal was that I just wanted a different middle name; I wanted somebody to associate me with something else. I really don't feel that way anymore; I just think in time people will forget. But if it was not for that movie, I would not have done the other twenty that I had a shot at because of the success of that one, so generally I'm grateful."

Likewise, Blount's favorite work is not in a horror movie but in the Hallmark Hall of

continued on page 61



## A bizarre peek into filmmaking at its worst.

### ED WOOD

A Buena Vista release of a Touchstone Pictures Presentation of a Burton/DiNovi production. Directed by Tim Burton. Produced by Denise DiNovi, Burton. Executive producer, Michael Lehmann. Screenplay, Scott Alexander & Larry Karaszewski, based on *Nightmare in Ecstasy* by Rudolph Grey. Camera, Stefan Czapsky; editor, Chris Lebenzon; music, Howard Shore; production design, Tom Duffield. 10/94, 124 mins, R.

Ed Wood.....Johnny Depp  
Bela Lugosi.....Martin Landau  
Dolores Fuller.....Sarah Jessica Parker  
Kathy O'Hara.....Patricia Arquette  
Kriswell.....Jeffrey Jones  
Vampira.....Lisa Marie  
"Bunny" Breckenridge.....Bill Murray

by Dan Cziraky

Tim Burton has crafted one of the most interesting screen biographies ever. Shot in crisp B&W, this amazing film chronicles the early career of Wood (Depp), an incredibly untalented filmmaker who dreams of becoming a legend like Orson Welles. Burton is truly able to empathize with Wood, as he is also considered an oddball by mainstream Hollywood and started a close friendship with elderly horror star Vincent Price prior to his death last October.

Casting former 21 JUMP STREET pretty-boy Johnny Depp as Wood was a risk for both director and actor that paid off. Depp, who's been making a film career of playing offbeat characters (*CRY BABY*, *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS*), expertly captures the wide-eyed enthusiasm and dogged determination that Wood exhibited in life. Depp's charisma is so strong that he's able to portray Wood's transvestitism without looking like an idiot or, worse, a drag-queen. Landau gives an Oscar-worthy performance as Lugosi, making the bitter, drug-ad-

dicted actor sympathetic and humorous without being campy. Even more than Wood's early career, it's his friendship with Lugosi that is at the heart of this film. Frail and old, Lugosi is still a star in Wood's eyes, and Depp and Landau manage to create a wonderful chemistry.

The supporting cast is likewise excellent. Murray is hysterical as Breckenridge, a former drag-queen saving up for a Mexican sex-change operation. Parker (*HONEYMOON IN VEGAS*) is great as Fuller, Wood's original leading lady, who finally comes to the realization that Wood's entourage of misfits will never achieve the stardom they seek. Arquette (*ELM STREET 3*) has a quality of sweetness and innocence rarely seen in films today, combined with a light comedic sensibility that serves her well during the scene when Wood confesses his transvestitism on their first date. Burton's current paramour, former Calvin Klein model Lisa Marie, makes a stunning film debut as Maila Nurmi, a.k.a. "Vampira," evoking the smoky sensuality and macabre wit that Cassandra Peterson has never been able to duplicate. Jones (*AMADEUS*) ably portrays Criswell's smarmy charm, and plays well off Depp's innocence. George "The Animal" Steele, a dead-ringer for Tor Johnson, displays a flair for physical comedy in his acting debut, as he struggles to fit through a shoddy set door on the stage of *BRIDE OF THE MONSTER*.

The scriptors and Burton decided that telling this story in a sympathetic manner was more important than close adherence to the facts,

Depp as Wood, along with Sarah Jessica Parker as girlfriend Delores Fuller.



Johnny Depp effectively portrays cult schlock filmmaker ED WOOD.

which is usually the case in Hollywood biographies. Wood and Fuller were married, and he even had a brief second marriage prior to marrying Cathy. Wood's alcoholism is greatly downplayed. Despite the uplifting effect on Wood in the film, his meeting with Orson Welles (Vincent D'Onofrio) while filming *PLAN NINE never happened*. Lugosi wasn't as penniless as he is made out to be, and married a fourth time before his death in 1956. Lugosi also enjoyed a brief career revival in Las Vegas as the star of "The Bela Lugosi Revue," though he was forced to quit this well-paying job because of his failing health. But the most amazing and bizarre story elements are true, as when the cast and crew are baptized prior to filming *PLAN NINE*.

While Wood's no-budget, incomprehensible films weren't unique for the period (just as bad were *ROBOT MONSTER*, *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*, and *THE KILLER SHREWS*), it was Wood's zeal, insinuating itself into every frame of celluloid, that set his films apart. When you bring this story together with this cast, directed by Burton in a highly stylized manner that, at times, recalls Wood's films and his era, you get a film that delights both Wood devotees and genre film admirers in general. Burton treats these characters with the dignity and respect they never received in life. Though *ED WOOD* may not hold the interest of mainstream audiences, it stands on its own as a bizarre peek behind the scenes of filmmaking at its worst, and is certainly preferable to any of Wood's work. □

### FILM RATINGS

- Catch it opening night
- Worth seeing first run
- Wait for second-run
- Wait for video/cable
- Fodder for MST-3K

### APEX

Director, Phillip J. Roth; script, Roth and Ronald Schmidt. Republic Video, 9/94, 103 mins, R. With: Mitchell Cox, Lisa Ann Russell.

A would-be provocative thriller about a time-travelling soldier who returns from 100 years earlier and discovers a plague has decimated his era. The idea of a disease passed along in the course of time travel is superficially promising, but since the premise only poses the immediately answerable question of what caused the plague, suspense collapses. Worse, the action carrying us to this unsatisfying conclusion consists mostly of a group of disgruntled survivors shooting a series of identical plastic robots. Quick cutting attempts to compensate for the weak plot. But not only are the supposedly dazzling effects conventional and repetitive—no one even bothered to match live action with computer visuals in a convincing way. Contrary to its title, this represents the nadir of low-budget genre filmmaking.

○ James M. Faller

### TIME COP

Director, Peter Hyams; writer, Mark Verheiden. Universal Pictures, 10/94, 98 mins, R. With: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Mia Sara, Ron Silver.

Mediocre but entertaining flick about a cop who prevents time travelers from altering history. Unfortunately, the time paradox elements of the story are mishandled: sometimes, the time cops know when the past has altered, and sometimes they don't. So who cares as long as the action is exciting, right? Sad to say, the usually competent Hyams bungles many of the fight scenes, his camera seldom effectively capturing the action. *HARD TARGET* may have been no masterpiece, but at least John Woo knew how to shoot Van Damme.

●● Steve Biodrowski

Jean-Claude Van Damme as the titular TIME COP





## Adaptations that tap the wrong veins

### INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE

A Warner Bros./Geffen Pictures release of a Geffen Pictures presentation. Directed by Neil Jordan. Produced by David Geffen, Stephen Wooley. Screenplay by Anne Rice, based on her novel. Camera, Philippe Rousselot; editors, Mickey Audsley, Joke Van Wijk; music, Elliot Goldenthal; production design, Dante Ferretti; vampire makeup effects, Stan Winston, Michele Burke. 11/94, 122 mins, R.

Lestat.....Tom Cruise  
Louis.....Brad Pitt  
Armand.....Antonio Banderas  
Claudia.....Kirsten Dunst  
Santiago.....Stephen Rea  
Malloy.....Christian Slater

### MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

TriStar presents an American Zoetrope Production. Produced by Francis Ford Coppola, James V. Hart, John Veitch. Directed by Kenneth Branagh. Screenplay, Steph Lady and Frank Darabont, from the novel by Mary Shelly. Camera, Roger Pratt; editor, Andrew Marcus; production design, Tim Harvey; music, Patrick Doyle. 11/94, 128 mins, R.

Victor Frankenstein.....Kenneth Branagh  
The Creature.....Robert DeNiro  
Henry Clerval.....Tom Hulce  
Elizabeth.....Helena Bonham Carter  
Captain Walton.....Aidan Quinn  
Professor Waldman.....John Cleese

by Steve Biodrowski

It turns out that casting Tom Cruise was the strategic coup of the year. Not that his performance is brilliant—it isn't—but our collective expectations were lowered so far that the finished film inevitably exceeded them. How else to explain Anne Rice's gushing praise for an adaptation that is but a pale shadow of her densely textured novel?

Cruise is actually not half-bad in the role, but the character never appears as impressive on screen as he was on the page. Pitt is a little better as Louis, though his remorse is never as profoundly felt as it should be. Dunst is about as good as one could hope in the difficult role of Claudia. Only Banderas' Armand truly fulfills all expectations.

The film does capture some of the novel's power, but much of it is dissipated by director Neil Jordan's uncredited rewrite. Despite denials to the contrary, the film's first half is less an adaptation of *Interview*, than of the chapter in *The Vampire Lestat* which recounts the same events from Lestat's point of view, along with the doll scene from *Queen of the Damned* thrown in. The result is that these sequences are a bore. With Lestat's monstrosity seriously diminished, there is no dramatic conflict between him and Louis. Also, essential action (e.g., the Frenier episode, wherein Louis tries to save one of Lestat's victims but instead must save the victim's family from ruin) have been removed. This turns Louis into what his detractors always accused him

of being: a passive character moving invisibly through his own story, while Lestat is given all the flamboyant activity and some miscalculated comic relief.

Lestat is, frankly, overrated—not as a character, but as a vampire. A shameless self-promoter, with more guts than brains, he's not so much done anything remarkable as done a good job of sounding remarkable. His one moment of glory is killing a pack of wolves in the opening of *The Vampire Lestat*—a breathlessly exciting scene, to be sure. Louis, on the other hand, manages single-handedly to wipe out an entire coven of vampires through clever planning. This makes him a rogue, hunted by his own kind, whom he manages to evade for centuries, even while revealing his secrets to the mortal world through his interview. When Lestat arises in the 20th Century and takes center stage by, copycat-fashion, writing his own book, Louis manages what no other vampire can do: track Lestat down (without giving himself away).

Lestat has been gifted with greater powers through transfusions of blood from elder vampires. Louis, on the other hand, obviously has more common sense than the reckless Lestat ever will (which Lestat himself acknowledges). This is what makes Lestat the more viable series character: it is entertaining to watch him get out of trouble into which Louis would have never gotten in the first place. (For example, Louis was wise to advise against the adventure in *Tale of the Body Thief*, but if Lestat had taken the advice,

there would be no novel.) By not emphasizing this interpretation of Louis, the film falls into the trap of reducing itself to a mere prologue for a planned Lestat franchise.

Because the topic is vampires, Rice's work is inevitably compared to Bram Stoker. But in many ways a more illuminating comparison is with Mary Shelley. Rice's monsters tell us their stories, and in the telling, we learn to relate to them and see the world through their eyes, despite their horrible actions. Likewise, Shelley's monster, midway through the book, gives an account that reveals him to be much more human and pitiable than we had expected. Also interesting is the fact that both novels are delivered through a framing device of a character telling his story to a listener in the hope of making the listener realize the tragedy of the tale.

Louis in *INTERVIEW* fails miserably, when the interviewer asks to be made a vampire. Likewise, Walton, in Shelley's book, asks Frankenstein to reveal the secret of creating life, which Victor refuses. Surprisingly, this detail is omitted from Branagh's take on *MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN*, one of many examples of misplaced emphasis. Although much of the novel's detail does make it to the screen for the first time, the film still feels compelled to delete certain aspects and invent new ones.

The early scenes are overlong (i.e., regrettably faithful to the somewhat problematic source.) On many occasions the script feels compelled to offer misguided attempts at credibility, as if not realizing that the pow-

The shadow of Frankenstein's monster looms large over the life of his creator.



Brad Pitt as Louis destroys the *Theatres des Vampyres*.

er of the novel resided entirely in its imagination—the reader must simply make the great leap of willfully suspending disbelief and surrender to the tale.

Despite many botched scenes and an endlessly revolving camera, the film ultimately does work, because it captures the doppelganger theme of the book, wherein the two primary characters are locked into a fateful dance of death. Each will disappoint the other, and wreak endless havoc and unhappiness on their nemesis, destroying each other's hopes of happiness, until by the end they have nothing left to live for except the feud binding them together. It is for this reason that the Creature cries over the body of his Creator.

In this instance, the film improves on Shelley by having the monster join Victor on the funeral pyre. (In the book, the creature vows to immolate himself, then disappears "in darkness and in distance.") The two finally find a consummation in death, providing a moving coda to the doppelganger motif.

*INTERVIEW*, conversely, bungles its attempt to improve on the book's ending. What is Lestat doing in San Francisco, popping up in the back seat of the interviewer's car like Freddy Krueger in one of those bad *ELM STREET* endings that promise "There will be a sequel, whether you want it or not." □



## *This Nightmare merges dreams, art, and reality.*

### WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE

A New Line Cinema production. Directed and written by Wes Craven. Produced by Marianne Madalena. Executive producers, Robert Shaye, Craven. Camera, Mark Irwin; editor, Patrick Lussier; music, J. Peter Robinson. Production designer, Cynthia Charette. 10/94, 112 mins, R.

Freddy Krueger/Robert Englund.....Robert Englund  
Heather Langenkamp.....Herself  
Dylan.....Miko Hughes  
Chase Porter.....David Newsom  
John Saxon.....himself  
Wes Craven.....himself  
Robert Shaye.....himself  
Julie.....Tracy Middendorf

by Patricia Moir

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET was a rarity among genre films: an attempt to explore both the nature of supernatural experiences and the methods we employ to deal with them. Although the second sequel attempted at least partially to return to these themes, subsequent offerings have suffered from a tongue-in-cheek campiness which obscured the intelligence of Wes Craven's original concept. It is with great excitement, therefore, that original NIGHTMARE fans greet Craven's return to the series.

Craven's own nightmares are the primary source for his NEW NIGHTMARE, in which the original's cast and director play fictionalized versions of themselves, reuniting to make another Freddy Krueger film, only to discover that their creation has taken on a life of its own. To this already challenging metafictional structure, Craven has added

**The costume and makeup have been altered to make Freddy darker, but the attempt is only partially effective.**



Although scary, NEW NIGHTMARE's real strength lies in its thematic integrity.

the alternate reality of the dream world, which is linked to the realities within and, disturbingly, beyond the world of the film. Confused? That's OK—it would take a critical work the size of a graduate thesis to untangle the full implications of this ambitious narrative. It is a sign of Craven's maturity as a screenwriter that he is able to connect these various strata of consciousness and experience in a comprehensible and nearly seamless fashion, allowing viewers to sense intuitively that which the intellect cannot grasp without reflection.

His essential theme here is the relationship between waking reality, the world of dreams, and, by extension, the collective "dream world" of cinema. Craven suggests that these worlds, though perceived as separate by the conscious mind, are actually interacting continuously. His central metaphor for this interaction is the myth or fairy tale, which gives form and power to the creatures of our dreams while simultaneously allowing us to control them. Stories are the bottle which contains the genie; the stopper in the bottle is the literary closure, which defines and limits the monster's reach. When we neglect to provide this closure, as is the case with open-ended genre sequels, we leave the genie free to escape, to draw upon the power we have given him, and to act upon the conscious world in unpredictable and dangerous ways.

We must always finish the story. ("It's important," insists Heather's on-screen son [Hughes] when she balks at reading the gruesome finale of "Hansel and Gretel.") NEW

NIGHTMARE is Craven's attempt to finish the story he began ten years ago. His original NIGHTMARE stressed the importance of such childhood wisdom: while adults are often limited by rational expectations, children have not lost the capacity to recognize the truths embodied in stories, rhymes, and dreams. When Freddy Krueger, one aspect of the ancient archetypal corrupter of innocents, gains power through his life in our collective imagination, the responsibility of "closing the genie's bottle" falls to screenwriter Craven and lead actress Langenkamp. To do this, they must draw upon the child-like wisdom of myth and dream, confronting Freddy in his true, "much older" mythic form, which is infinitely more threatening than the wisecracking sadist portrayed in the NIGHTMARE sequels.

Craven wisely refrains from focusing on the literal figure of Freddy, concentrating instead on the ambiguous suggestions of his presence in the conscious world. The film deals with apparently explicable events, which nevertheless seem fraught with supernatural significance. The cracks which open in Heather's wall after the L.A. earthquake look suspiciously like Freddy's trademark slashes; the special effects artists who are killed by Freddy's hand in her dreams later turn up in a field, victims of an unknown blade-wielding assailant. Langenkamp gives an intelligent and convincing performance as a woman who doubts the sanity of her perceptions as she is forced to

confront the impossible on its own terms. Allowed to look and act her age in adult situations, as mother, wife, and professional, she displays an emotional range which was not apparent in the earlier films. The bond between parent and child is explored in compassionate detail, with a refreshing absence of sentimentality. When Heather accepts her intuitions and descends into her son's unconscious world to rescue him from Freddy, her actions provoke a sense of wonder and liberation—we can believe that she has discovered an archetypal power within herself, and has entered the dream as a protector of innocence and a formidable foe of evil.

Craven's part in all this is far more disturbing. As orchestrator of this modern fairy tale, he takes on the slightly ominous role of shaman, the link between conscious and unconscious worlds, and possessor of knowledge both dangerous and redeeming. The figure of the director stands curiously detached from the drama which unfolds before him, choreographing his actors' experiences and offering occasional cryptic hints about his purposes. One is unavoidably reminded of Peter O'Toole's god-like director in THE STUNT MAN, in whose ultimately benevolent intent the players must trust, if they are to complete the drama successfully.

NEW NIGHTMARE has its flaws, but they seem almost petty compared to its narrative strengths. Englund's considerable talent as a character actor remains unexploited in his appearances without the Freddy makeup, an unfortunate oversight given the importance of his character. Heather's descent into the Dante-esque hell of Freddy's true domain (an amplification of his famous boiler room) is beautifully designed and photographed but structurally inconsistent. Craven's intent was clearly to suggest the greater mythic context, but the sudden and unexpected shift from the prevailing "Hansel and Gretel" motif to classical mythology is somewhat disorienting. And Freddy's final appearance in the flesh is an anticlimax to the psychological tension generated by the suggestion of his presence; the costume and makeup have been altered in a brave attempt to portray him as a stranger, darker creature than we have seen previously, but the results are, alas,

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## SILENT TONGUE

Director and writer: Sam Shepard. Trimark Pictures, 9/94, 101 mins, R. With: Richard Harris, Alan Bates, Dermott Mulroney, River Phoenix.

Complex and intelligent, this deeply moving drama presumes a patient and attentive audience but abundantly rewards their time and interest. Like his feverish, off-Broadway plays, Shepard's film is a work of studied intensity, though with a sweep and scope not available to him in that medium.

In the early 1870s, a horse trader (Harris) in the Indian territory of the old Southwest kidnaps a Kiowa half-breed in hope of gaining spiritual solace for his son (Phoenix). Devastated by the loss of the woman's sister during childbirth, the boy has tied his wife's corpse to a tree, refusing to yield it to anyone for fear of the loneliness he will experience by acknowledging his loss. His father attempts to use the sister as a substitute for his son's late wife; instead the dead woman's ghost arises to rail against the transaction. These diatribes, along with the acts of vengeance the spirit provokes, provide eloquent testament to the historical crimes of European settlers.

While most revisionist dramas on this theme have about them an air of pompous didacticism, and are almost as benighted as the cowboy-and-Indian stories they replaced, Shepard's film is a notable exception. Though he makes some errors of a beginning director (such as using his camera like a scavenger searching for a theme), he more than compensates with a densely textured, compelling argument that unsettles any complacency we might have on this subject. As in *HAMLET*, these ghosts are not the stuff of genre horror, but they scare us all the more by attacking our collective memory and guilt.

●●● James M. Faller

## LITTLE BUDDHA

Director, Bernardo Bertolucci; writers, Mark Peploe and Rudy Wurlitzer, based on a story by Bertolucci. October Films Release, 140 mins. With: Keanu Reeves, Chris Isaak, Bridget Fonda.

Devout Buddhists may be unhappy with seeing this film reviewed as a fantasy, but when director Bertolucci resorts to modern high-tech opticals at the conclusion to portray a dynamic confrontation between Good and Evil, one can't help thinking it should be mentioned in the pages of *Imagi-Movies*. As John Barth points out in his essay "Tales within Tales within Tales" (in *The Friday Book*), "It goes without saying that one generation's or culture's realism is another's patent artifice."

Despite what you've heard Reeves is good as Siddhartha, who is not born an omnipotent god but rather a young innocent who gradually learns of the world's ills and seeks divine wisdom to help people cope with them. This traditional telling of the story is interesting and educational for Western viewers unfamiliar with Buddhism. Unfortunately, it is ensconced in a modern-day wraparound tale involving reincarnation that does little to parallel or illustrate the flashback sequences that make up most of the movie. Worth seeing for the curious.

●● Jay Stevenson

## CINEMA

by Steve Biodrowski

Who would have thought that this seemingly inauspicious *STAR GATE* would be so much better than the seventh *STAR TREK* feature, *GENERATIONS*? *GATE* is not great, but at least it makes an honorable attempt to be genuine science-fiction. One has to accept the plot device of the Star Gate itself, which can teleport people across half a galaxy, but once the trip has been made, it is a pleasant surprise to find an alien culture that, for once, doesn't speak English; the language barrier is even surmounted in a way that turns out to be relatively easy but nonetheless believable. It's also nice that these desert people don't look like your typical white Europeans but like an ethnic group that would be appropriate for the terrain.

The introduction of an evil alien takes a turn into a more fantastic realm, and the conclusion almost becomes a *DR. WHO* episode. (Didn't he overthrow a totalitarian regime every other episode?) Still, the action is exciting, and there's something innately charming about combining science-fiction with *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA*.

*GENERATIONS*, on the other hand, is weak science-fiction. Rather like *TREK 5*'s Sybok, who wanted to find Eden, McDowell's obsessed Dr. Soran is searching for heaven. It's expressed in techno-babble terms such as "nexus" and "time continuum," of course, but it all emerges as a MacGuffin of the worst sort. The true point of the

Though no masterpiece, *STAR GATE* still outperformed the new *TREK* movie.



## STAR TREK, STAR GATE: The latter shines brighter.



With only a few minutes on screen, the old crew outshines the Next Generation.

story is to pass the torch to the new crew and to get the two captains together. The opening ten minutes are arguably among the best big screen *TREK* yet, a mini-movie featuring three of the old crew on the Enterprise B. But when we flash forward to *TNG*'s crew, the interest level plummets. Partly this is because their first scene is a ridiculous attempt at whimsy in the dreaded holodeck; more importantly, it's because the new crew have not yet attained the level of mythic archetype that would make them capable of filling the big screen.

Despite self-congratulatory

claims that this would be a self-contained movie, this is nothing more than a series two-parter (not a very good one) shot in Panavision and edited together. There is even an obligatory and annoying B story about Data's emotion chip, which wastes screen time that should have been devoted to the underdeveloped main plot. Other flaws abound, such as the inexplicable appearance (courtesy of talented but miscast d.p. Alonzo) of *shadows* on the Enterprise. Even worse the meeting of the two captains sparks no chemistry, as their personalities are never engaged by the dilemma at hand. Surprisingly, Shatner acts rings around Stewart, whose low-key approach proves weak on the big screen.

In a desperate attempt to justify the feature treatment of this TV script, the film crashes the Enterprise D—a truly spectacular effects sequence that in technical terms justifies the price of admission. But, emotionally, how many times can you destroy the Enterprise and get any juice out of it? As if to underline this failing, the denouement has an underused Riker expressing regret at never getting into the captain's chair, to which Picard responds, "I'm sure this won't be the last ship christened Enterprise." After the number of times the Enterprise has been trashed (twice in this movie!), it's time someone realizes this jinxed name should be retired. □



## Sixth season hardening of the arteries

### RED DWARF

Directed by Andy De Emmony. Produced by Justin Judd. Written and executive produced by Rob Grant and Doug Naylor. Production design, Mel Bibby, Stephen Bradshaw; lighting, John Pomphrey; visual effects design, Peter Wragg with Mike Tucker, Paul McGuinness; editor, Graham Hutchings; video effects, Karl Mooney; music, Leo Brower.  
 Rimmer.....Chris Barrie  
 Lister.....Craig Charles  
 Cat.....Danny John-Jules  
 Kryten.....Robert Llewellyn

by Dennis Fischer

In the sixth season of RED DWARF, one can see the TV effect known as hardening of the arteries. Running out of fresh ideas, writer-creators, Grant and Naylor are content to recycle old ones. The characters have all been well established, and personality oriented gags could be written for them on autopilot, as seems to have been the case this season.

The major change is placing the crew on the shuttlecraft Starbug for all six episodes, which form a loosely connected story about searching for the now missing Red Dwarf ship. Unfortunately, this eliminates the character of Holly, the ship's senile computer, hence Hattie Hayridge's absence this season.

The episodes fall into familiar patterns, wherein crew explore a dangerous area of space, meet some new threat, and then high-tail it out of the vicinity to save their asses. As running gags, Rimmer now spouts regulation numbers which Kryten reveals to be inappropriate for the situation, while Cat now acts as a sixth sense sensor, "smelling" trouble ahead. Both conceits prove to be tiresome. The six episodes are as follows:

"Psirens," brings the crew into contact once more with metamorphosing aliens. There is an amusing, disgusting bit when Lister fulfills his fantasy of kissing Peter Tranter's sexy sister (Samantha Robson), whom a cutaway reveals as an ugly insectoid Psiren preparing to suck out his brains.

"Legion" is inspired by the biblical story of a man possessed by demons who calls himself "Legion." An android (Nigel Williams) named Legion turns out to be a gestalt creature made up of elements of the personalities around him, in this case the Red Dwarf crew.

"Gunman of the Apocalypse" is the semi-obligatory western tribute that all great s.f. series seem to have, as well as a variation on



Season 6 of RED DWARF remains likable, though lacking new inspiration.

computer viruses and on the virtual reality idea tackled before.

"Emohawk—Polymorph II" is a direct sequel to third season's "Polymorph" episode. Rimmer is expounding on his theory of military history (the side with the shorter hair cut wins) when a ship uncloaks and charges the Starbug crew with looting Space Corps derelicts.

"Rimmerworld" brings back Liz Hickling's rogue simulant as the Starbug crew search the destroyed simulant ship for fuel. Rimmer once more shows that his true color is yellow when he abandons the rest of the crew by taking an escape pod out of a sticky situation.

The title of the final episode, "Out of Time," suggests what went wrong this season and perversely ends on an incomplete note. The

crew get an SOS from a future Starbug. When the present crew refuse to aid them, the future crew attacks. The last shot shows the present Starbug exploding, followed by "To Be Continued." Of course, being in a false reality area leaves an easy out for next season.

Season 6 of RED DWARF remains likable, but it has become like an old friend who, having said what's on his mind, simply resorts to repeating himself. Given the high quality of previous seasons, this is somewhat to be expected. One hopes that the talented Grant and Naylor team will give up resorting to formula and carry the Red Dwarf crew into new areas of hilarity with the next season. Meanwhile the current episodes pass the time amiably if unambitiously. □

### MST-3K: LIVE!

Producer, Jim Mallon; writers, Mallon, Mike Nelson, Trace Beaulieu, Kevin Murphy. Best Brains Productions, 9/94. With: Nelson, Beaulieu, Murphy, Frank Conniff.

As a movie, the MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000 crew's deconstruction of THIS ISLAND EARTH would have been one of the funniest of the year. As an episode of the TV show, it would have been just fair. As an on-stage event, it was damn good fun. Best Brains staged three live performances as part of a Minneapolis convention this September, at least in part as a last-ditch pitch to Universal, who pulled the plug on the movie earlier this year. Who knows how the three incognito Universal execs in attendance liked the show (the studio was supposed to decide by year's end whether to resurrect the film deal), but it was a big hit with the fans.

Pitched to a big crowd in front of a big screen, a few of MST's charms do get lost. Accommodating audience guffaws pretty much limited the cast to one-liners, so the tag-team banter is missed. Also, the script, which presumably would have been used on the movie, seemed pitched to a broader audience, with copious fart and crotch jokes.

By any standard except that set by the TV show itself, the writing was outstanding and the delivery superb. Nelson and 'bot voices Beaulieu and Murphy were self-assured and verbally deft. THIS ISLAND EARTH might be of considerably higher quality than, say EEGAH! or MANOS, THE HANDS OF FATE, but it still offered plenty of grist for the mill, with its bug-eyed monsters, Russell "Professor" Johnson in a supporting role, and a houseful of brainy '50s scientists who can't figure out that the guys with the 6-inch foreheads are aliens. The show featured the usual complement of obscure pop culture cracks, starting with the Gary Lewis and the Playboys jape at the opening credits: "This Island Earth/doesn't shine for me anymore." And the glorious Conniff, as is his wont, stole the show as the lovably bumbling TV's Frank.

There's something to be said for watching MST-3K in a big crowd; it's a dish best served with company, particularly when the company is a couple thousand MST-ies worshipping live at the altar. Universal probably can't be blamed for wondering if that same buzz can be achieved with a bunch of mall rats at the multiplex, but if the movie does get made you can bet it will be seriously funny.

● ● ● Andy Markowitz

### BLANK MAN

Director, Mike Binder; writers, Damon Wayans & J.F. Lawton. Columbia Pictures, PG. With: Damon Wayans, David Alan Grier, Robyn Givens, Jon Polito, Jason Alexander.

Sadly unfunny parody of superhero flicks. Unfortunately, the inspiration is the old BATMAN TV series, which makes the humor badly out of date. And why is it these black superheros (like METEOR MAN) are always played for laughs? Can't we have a serious one, for a change?

● Jay Stevenson



## LASERBLAST

by Dennis Fischer

## UGETSU and KWAIDAN: Two Japanese Masterpieces on CD

Those familiar with Japanese films only via Godzilla, Gamera, and their ilk are missing some truly expressive genre cinema, though limited availability outside of universities and occasional film festivals probably accounts for the lack of appreciation. Thankfully, the Criterion people have persevered in their quest to present the finest in world cinema, and one of their latest offerings is UGETSU (a.k.a. UGETSU MONOGATARI), which translates as "Tales of the Pale Moon after the Rain." Acclaimed as one of Kenji Mizoguchi's masterpieces, the film was adapted from two ghost stories by Akirari Ueda: "Asaji ga Tado" ("The House in the Thicket") and "Jasei no in" ("The Lust of the White Serpent") by Matsuro Kawaguchi and Yoshikata Yoda. The first has to do with a man meeting the ghost of his wife, and the second with a man falling in love with a ghost. The screenwriters combined the stories, adding a satirical tale of a man who abandons his wife to become a samurai.

Mizoguchi's work is thematically rich and pictorially beautiful. The lushly atmospheric cinematography by Kazuo Miyagawa has been wonderfully transferred to the disk from a 35mm duplicate negative. The transfer also features electronic subtitling—a tremendous improvement over previous prints in terms of readability.

The director relies heavily on two techniques: keeping the action

at a distance from the camera, which require actors to express emotion through body language, and long sustained takes, which maintain visual interest without cutting away during expressive segments. One can see Mizoguchi's careful blending of fantasy and reality here, the different styles employed for the realistic and supernatural elements which nevertheless mesh into a masterful whole.

The prime ghost in the story, the seductive Lady Wakasa (Mchiko Kyo) is presented not with trick photography but in Noh style, with a white, subtly expressive face. She represents not an evil spirit but a young woman who died without having tasted the fruits of love and now experiences that pleasure by falling in love with the married Genjuro (Masayuki Mor), who temporarily believes he has found paradise in her arms. Each character in the film ends up discovering his or her identity: Genjuro's wife (Kinuyo Tanaka) by renouncing fleshly love, Wakasa by attaining it, Genjuro himself by attaining joy through his work rather than the money it brings him, while his brother-in-law Tobei (Sakae Ozawa) renounces his foolish dreams of becoming a samurai when he ultimately realizes what he truly sought was the regard of his wife.

The disk offers some attractive bonuses. On the second analog track, Donald Ritchie, Norman Yonemoto, and Keiko McDonald



Mizoguchi's masterpiece UGETSU is thematically rich and pictorially beautiful.

provide informative commentary on the film and Mizoguchi. Additionally, though CLV, the disk offers some production stills, plugs two trailers (not three as it says on the sleeve). Lastly, there is a fairly uninformative video interview with cinematographer Miyagawa presented in Japanese and English.

KWAIDAN, which won the Special Jury Prize at the 1965 Cannes Film Festival, is quite clearly an "art" film, with all that that implies—from its deliberately artificial sets to its lugubrious pacing. Instead of the tradition of Noh plays, it adapts techniques from Kabuki and Bunaraku puppet theatre. Directed by Masaki Kobayashi from a quartet of Japanese folk tales transcribed by Lafcadio Hearn, the film makes striking use of color and design. Filmed in the style of Italy or Hong Kong, all the sound was dubbed afterwards in an empty airplane hanger. The eerie score, by avant garde composer Toru Takemitsu, is often mistaken for sound effects, with its heavily percussive use of wood being split or stones struck. When initially released in the United States, the second and longest segment, "The Woman of the Snow," was removed and released separately as a short.

The Criterion disk is notable as the only video version that retains the originals carefully crafted widescreen compositions. It presents the film in its complete forms with a pristine print; plus, all subti-

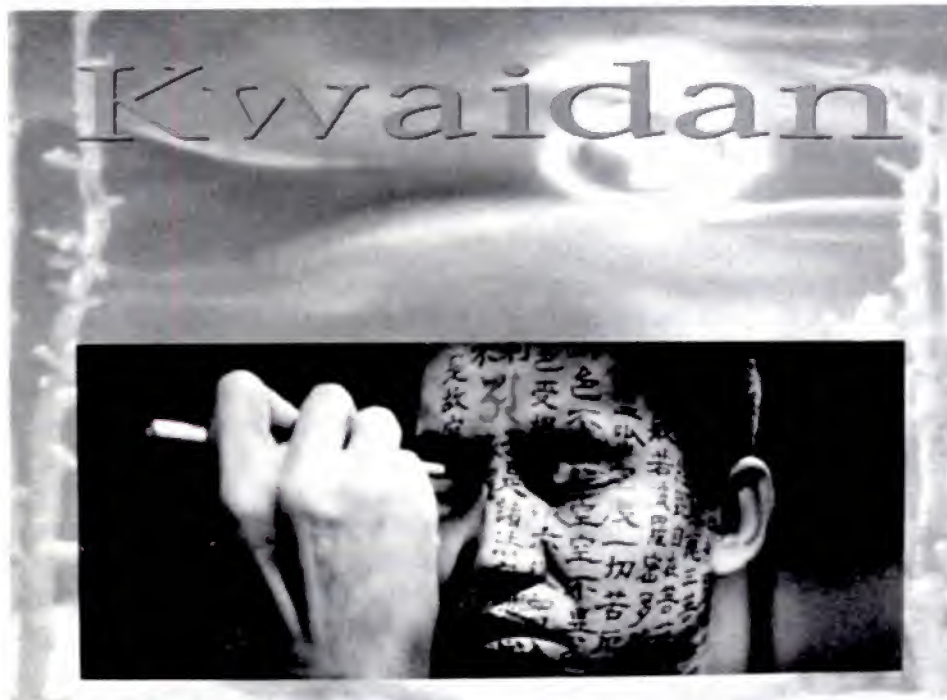
ties are placed on the black bar running along the bottom of the screen.

"The Black Hair" concerns a husband (Rentaro Mikuni) who divorces his poor wife to marry the daughter of a rich man, only to be consumed by guilt. Years later, he returns to find his first wife mysteriously unchanged. In "The Woman of the Snow" a woodcutter sees a beautiful snow demon (Keiko Kishi) freeze a man to death, but she spares his life as long as he promises not to reveal what he has seen. Years later, he is tempted to tell his ideal wife.

In "Hoici, the Earless," which provided John Milius with the inspiration for a sequence in CONAN THE BARBARIAN, a blind Biwa player (Kazuo Nakamura) is coerced into giving a command performance for ghosts, with (given the title) predictable results. "Cup of Tea," in which a warrior encounters a reflection that is not his own, proves that Kobayashi was not adept at comic relief; however, the film as a whole can be mesmerizing, and Yoshio Miyajima's cinematography is incredibly vivid.

Today, the market for foreign films is limited to a few small theatres in big cities. How will young cineastes be exposed to classics from other cultures? Probably on video, so Criterion is to be commended for making these quintessential efforts available to appreciative audiences both old and new. □

KWAIDAN, with its deliberately artificial sets, makes striking use of design.





## NOSTALGIA

by Anthony P. Montesano

## BASEBALL FANTASIES

*Exploring the magic of America's Favorite Pastime*

The sport of baseball has created a mythology all its own. From its legendary players, to its legendary playing fields, for generations the sport has been at the very heart of the collective consciousness of what it means to be American. This year, that image was tainted by player and owner greed, leaving fans stunned and disheartened.

In film fantasies however, baseball has no such stain. The sport has been adapted to almost every genre, but none more befits it than fantasy (given the already spiritual nature of the game). The following handful of baseball fantasy films are so similar in their underlying themes, that they can, in retrospect, be viewed as being "of a piece." Collectively, they demonstrate why a nation fell in love with the sport. Audiences see in the game the same values they want in their own lives: loyalty, friendship, self-determination, and miracles.

On screen, baseball is a metaphor for the very growth of America itself. "Baseball," says the character Terence Mann in *FIELD OF DREAMS*. "Throughout it all, the one constant has been baseball. It has marked the time." And baseball fantasy films have followed suit, marking the American spirit. The motifs that run through the films are simple American values—the right, for example, of every boy to play catch with his Dad. That "right" is the very culmination of *FIELD OF DREAMS* (1989) and *THE NATURAL* (1984), but it also runs through *THE SANDLOT* (1993) and the Disney remake, this year, of *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD*.

Just "playing the game" is all the kids in *THE SANDLOT* care about. For them, baseball equals life, and no one is greater than the "Great Bambino" himself. So, when the gang is faced with the dilemma of retrieving a priceless baseball they lost to a mean junkyard dog, it's no surprise that the ghost of Babe Ruth himself appears in a dream to the most ardent player of the Sandlot gang, with sage advice. "Heroes are remembered," says Ruth, urging the boy to face his fears and retrieve the ball. "But legends never die." *THE SANDLOT* is as much a film about being a kid as anything else, and incorporates into itself, all



Christopher Lloyd (center) plays a whimsical angel who aids a failing baseball team at the request of a boy in the new version of *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD*.

the magical nature of childhood, like stories that turn dogs into monsters, and baseball players into demi-gods. "They say he was more than a man, but less than a god," explains one of the gang when talking about Ruth.

Indeed, in the baseball fantasy, the legends of the past oversee the sport from the great beyond. They care about their sport and the bearers of the torch they have passed down. When the angels arrive—at the prayers of a little girl—to help out a failing Pittsburgh Pirates ball club in the original *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD* (1951), we discover they're actually the spirits of the great players of the past, including Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, Walter

Johnson, and Eddie Collins.

In *FIELD OF DREAMS*, first the ghosts of the shamed 1919 "Black" Sox appear on the ballfield cut from a cornfield, but soon other greats show up, just "to play the game"—forever. But the field is not only about playing unresolved games, it's about the unresolved issues in the lives of every American. Only on the playing field, can these issues be dealt with and resolved once and for all.

"Is this heaven?" asks the ghost of "Shoeless" Joe Jackson. "No," is the response. "This is Iowa."

While prayers do the trick in *ANGELS IN THE OUTFIELD*, in *DAMN YANKEES* (1958), a Washington Senators fan sells his soul to

the devil to help his team become winners. In the comedy/fantasy *OH, GOD!*, George Burns—as the Almighty—confides in store clerk John Denver, that the last miracle he performed "was the 1969 Mets." Divine—or demonic—intervention has been woven into baseball fantasies from the start. But, very often, destiny is left up to the individual.

*THE NATURAL*, adapted by Barry Levinson from the Bernard Malamud novel, is a magical story of second chances and true love, a tale in which loyalty and goodness triumph over greed and evil. As the film opens, Roy Hobbs is in a pasture playing catch with his father. "You've got a gift, boy," says the father. "But it's not enough. You've got to develop yourself." The sudden death of his father leaves Hobbs to search out his own destiny. When a lightning storm splits a tree in his back yard in half, Hobbs carves a bat he dubs "Wonderboy" from its remains, and soon becomes a hitting sensation, headed for the majors. But evil, in many forms, sidelines Hobbs, and he doesn't get his chance until much later in life, when his Ruthian home runs—with the help of Wonderboy—lift his team, the New York Knights, up in the standings from last to first. What the film tries to answer is whether the magic of Hobbs is in his bat or in himself. By the end, as Hobbs returns to the field of his home to play catch with his son, the answer is obvious.

But the same questions also arise in *THE SANDLOT* and *FIELD OF DREAMS*. How much of the magic is external forces; how much is internal determination? In the Capra-esque *MR. DESTINY*, Jim Belushi's character is convinced that if he had only hit a homer in the big game as a teenager, instead of striking out, his entire life would have turned out better. When his fairy godfather, played by Michael Caine, grants the wish, Belushi realizes that had he hit the home run, he would not have a better life; he'd have a *different* life, one that didn't include his wife, children, and friends.

Life, like baseball, isn't only about hitting homers. It's also, claims the baseball fantasy film, what you learn and how you grow when you strike out. □



## NEW NIGHTMARE

continued from page 56

only partially effective.

Special credit is due to editor Lussier, whose contribution is evident both in action sequences and in the subtle, progressive depictions of character reactions. Robinson's music evokes emotions without ever becoming overbearing. And d.p. Irwin creates a suggestive mood of sunlit horror, which sustains the tension of the film through both day and night sequences.

WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE provides some genuine scares, but its real strength lies in its thematic integrity and its examination of serious spiritual and intellectual questions. By encouraging further speculation on the mysteries of dreams, art, and reality, Craven has exceeded the genre's all-too-frequent limitations to create a film which should survive judgment by any critical standard. □

## LISA BLOUNT

continued from page 53

Fame television production, THE AMERICAN STORY. "As much as I enjoyed doing the horror stuff, this was an opportunity to really get down to business," she explains. "For me, it was very serious. Hallmark does wonderful projects, and this was a subject that had never really been done before. It was about a very small Southern community, where the men are trying to re-integrate into the society, post-World War II, and their families are trying to deal with it. It's very multi-dimensional, and it took a lot of time for me to find the character: I worried myself sick over it; I wanted to do the women justice who had actually gone through these experiences. I didn't have anything to call upon but my own imagination. Everybody involved gave their all, and it was so well received. I got such glowing reviews, like never before. It was just overwhelming. I think I'm most proud of that."

Of her work in the genre, she concludes, "Adventure movies and horror movies—I've done a lot of both—turn out to be physically demanding in ways that you don't realize when you see the final product. You know, I thank God for stunt people. I am athletic, and when I felt it was necessary—when I felt the shot would suffer by allowing the stunt person to do it—I would do it myself. Those days are long since gone. From now on, I'll do what I have to, but I'll give these people work and let them do it. I would not trade those experiences for anything—but I would not do it again. Once you get to a certain point in chronological age, as well as having done as many of them as I have, the fun wears off." □

## RAY HARRYHAUSEN

continued from page 28

lot of color change."

"Like Mighty Joe Young," Franciscus says, "he doesn't want to be there, and he's murdered by civilization. Gwangi'd be fine if he'd just been left alone. Basically, it's about Man tampering with things he doesn't know about."

But the titular character could never have the audience identification of Kong: dinosaurs are simply too un-anthropomorphic to be sympathetic. In his first appearance, he eats a defenseless goof of a dinosaur, and later gobbles a dwarf who was trying to free him from his cage. His end in a fiery cathedral (marred by some transparent matte work) should inspire pity; it comes across as simply uncomfortable, a howling animal burned to death by uncaring humans.

"I'm always fascinated with GWANGI on how everyone wanted to pick the faults in it," says Harryhausen. "Very few people mentioned all the virtues of good, sound entertainment. People who went to see it—those who *did* see it—enjoyed it immensely."

There were precious few who *did*. The Kinney Corporation bought out Hyman's Seven Arts before Schneer delivered the finished film. When the new Warners regime took charge in 1969, they stuck GWANGI on the lower half of double bills with the likes of GIRL ON A MOTORCYCLE or THE GOOD GUYS & THE BAD GUYS with little ballyhoo.

"That was insanity," sputters Harryhausen. "It was ludicrous that they'd just dump it like it was an ordinary film, without any publicity at all! Then we got this bill for a fantastic amount for publicity, which I certainly didn't think we deserved. The new Warners management had no interest in the picture at all."

Gwangi, the character and the film, did not deserve its fate. It is not the "quite bad picture" Chaffey calls it. It moves rapidly; the photography is gorgeous, the action scenes exciting. If not a cult classic, then it has at least become a mainstay on TV. "It's still my kids' favorite movie," says Franciscus.

"My niece brought me to her school for Show and Tell," recalls Bast, "and I explained how it was created, then watched it with a roomful of seven year-olds. I got a chance to see the effect it still had on the audience it was designed for." Still, after the poor commercial showing, Schneer and Harryhausen decided it was finally time to return to the source of their greatest success for another Arabian Nights fantasy. □

**PART THREE will trace the final decade of Harryhausen's career, beginning with GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD.**

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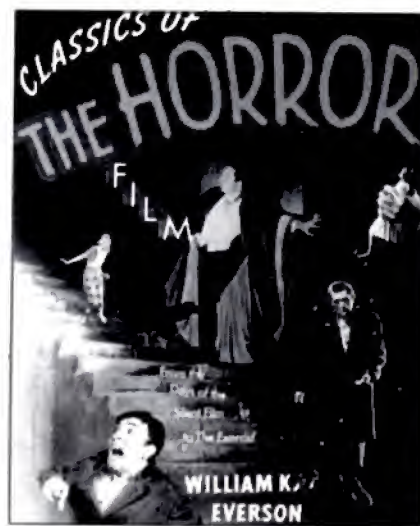
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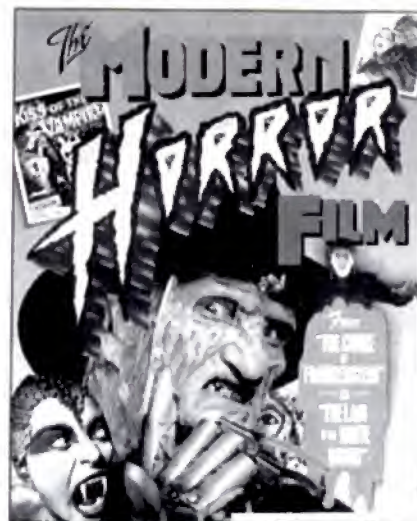
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# LETTERS

## APOLOGIES

Regarding your most recent article/review on DINOSAUR ISLAND, I don't mind that (as reported elsewhere) editor Steve Biodrowski went through a handful of reviewers until he found one hungry enough to see his name in print that he'd do a hatchet job on the picture. I don't care that the writer reported erroneous rumors about the film without ever consulting either Fred Olen Ray or myself about the facts. And I really don't care much that *Imagi-Movies* chose to trash my personal credibility and career along with the picture. That's a by-product of cheap-shot journalism that creative people have to face occasionally.

But what I do mind greatly is the misspelling of my name twice differently within the same review. Being of similar dissent [sic], I notice that Mr. Biodrowski always has the wherewith-all to proof read his own byline and get it correct—and his last name is even longer than mine. For the record, it's W-Y-N-O-R-S-K-I. Thank you.

Jim Wynorski  
Van Nuys, CA

*[Sincere apologies for the unforgivable misspellings of your last name. Rest assured it will not happen again. However, I'm glad the other things mentioned in your letter didn't bother you, because none of them are true. The allegation that reviewers who liked DINOSAUR ISLAND were turned down while a negative review was specifically commissioned from someone "hungry to see his name in print" is a laughable fallacy. Actually, my first choice, on the basis of his having seen the film first, wrote the review, purely according to his own personal opinion—which is, after all, his job. As far as the "erroneous rumors" (presumably, the review's statement that you directed 70% of the movie): on page 8 of Femme Fatales 2:2, Fred Olen Ray himself is quoted thus: "Jim was madly in love with the film and ended up directing 70% of it." Ray did confirm this to us. I'm not sure why you perceive the review as a personal attack on your career and credibility, but rest assured it was not.]*

## GUILTY WITH AN EXPLANATION

While I've admired many of Mr. Biodrowski's past articles, he was way off base with his criticism of

Abel Ferrara *BODY SNATCHERS* ("The Ignorant Plot," *IM 2:1*) After accurately identifying the central metaphors of Don Siegel's and Phillip Kaufman's versions (the Red Scare and urban angst, respectively), he claims, "the third [version] has no central metaphor at all." If anything, I found the metaphor too blatant, but if others missed it, maybe it was subtle. Immediately after the opening credits, Anwar's character refers to her stepmother as "the woman who replaced [my] mother." It's safe to say the nuclear family meltdown is the new film's central metaphor. In addition, the military base setting and Anwar's love interest carrying emotional baggage from shooting people in Kuwait provide a nifty secondary metaphor of the '90s Nintendo War mentality.

Mr. Biodrowski also seriously misfires when he claims the new film doesn't work because "Anwar's character...is no more non-conformist than any average young woman." Are either Kevin McCarthy's small town doctor or Donald Sutherland's public sector employee radical non-conformists? An enduring theme in Finney's original novel is how "common" persons can value their individuality over their life. Everyone, no matter how outwardly mundane, is a "truly unique individual."

Many critics were put off by Ferrara's distinct approach to Finney's material, but the last thing I want in a *BODY SNATCHERS* remake is pod-like duplication.

Christian Simonsen  
San Francisco, CA

*[You're right about the enduring theme of Finney's original novel, but one of the splendid ironies of the Miles Bennell character is that he is, in a sense, a pod at the beginning of the story, reluctant to risk emotional entanglements since being burned in a divorce. His latent humanity comes out while confronting the pod invasion, and the point of my review was that, because Anwar's Marti Malone remains mostly ignorant of the invasion, she never undergoes a similar confrontation and transformation. A better protagonist would have been the local girl Marti befriends, who not only knows that something is wrong but shows the kind of spark and individuality that would have made her an interesting opponent*

*to the pods taking over her town. My insisting that a *BODY SNATCHERS* protagonist should be a complete non-conformist was no doubt a bit too dogmatic; rather, I should have advanced this as one possible way of producing a remake that was not "pod-like duplication." I think this would have been more interesting than the meltdown of the nuclear family—which, though it may have been the film's central metaphor, doesn't necessarily benefit from being addressed within a *BODY SNATCHERS* scenario. After all, stepmothers, wicked or otherwise, can crop up anywhere.]*

## MORPHIN' MANIA

First, let me congratulate you on the success of *Imagi-Movies*. I have enjoyed each issue and look forward to more. This letter is a request, and in doing so I apologize if I insult the integrity and creativity of you, your publication, and your fans. Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers Mania has hit my house. I have five- and two-year-old sons who would love to see an article on the Power Rangers in your magazine. Normally, *Imagi-Movies* covers just that, movies, but I know you have deviated from the norm with a *LOIS AND CLARK* article. Also, Saban Entertainment has plans for a movie version next Spring. I realize that the show is considered a joke among most adults, including your readers. I agree; I was the biggest anti-morphin' parent around. But there is no escaping it: even when I ban the show from my household, that was all my son spoke about, so now he's allowed to watch it about once a week. I don't understand why it's the number one show six times a week, but it is.

Remember, these are the sci-fi fans of the future, and possibly future *Imagi-Movies* subscribers. My sons are already fans of both *Imagi* and *Cinefantastique*. They enjoy the familiar characters such as Ninja Turtles and Jack Skelington, and the unfamiliar monsters as well. Kids love this stuff! And you can bet if a live appearance by the Power Rangers can back up traffic for five miles on the Hollywood Freeway and force off ramps to be closed, a story by you would boost sales for that issue.

Dear Mr. Editor and fans, don't scoff. Remember how much we loved *Godzilla*, and what about that giant flying turtle? Think about it,

please.

Janette Short  
West Covina, CA

## HORRIBLE REMAKES

I would like to address an issue that's really starting to annoy me: the Horror Remake! Why are so many talented directors resorting to doing remakes that we don't need? It seems that every time I pick up one of your magazines, there's mention of a "planned remake." If talented directors like John Carpenter really "admire" the horror classics, why don't they leave them alone and learn from them (i.e. use them as inspiration to make movies, not the movies to make). He should bury the hatchet on all his planned remakes. No wonder he's slipped to #48 on your "Most Powerful People in Science Fiction" list, well behind names like David Koepf that shouldn't even be on the list in the first place!

Wes Craven, on the other hand, was inspired by the real life of his actress and by the Hollywood business, enough to make *THE PLAYER* meets *NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*. Not only may he revive the Freddy Franchise; hopefully, he'll revive intelligent horror movies as well.

Tony Servino  
Haddonfield, NJ

*[As you can see from this issue's *Sinister Sentinel*, we agree with you on the subject of remaking classic horror films.]*

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Convinced no one was going to buy *IM 2:1* (it had been on the stands forever), I talked the newsstand owner into selling it to me for a buck. (Hell, he was just going to rip the cover off and get credit for it anyway!) It was the usual *CFQ*-clone, but the humiliation you went through while interviewing Jack Palance was worth the \$1.00 price. I'd have paid good money to witness such a spectacle. How soon before *IM* sells tickets to a good ol' rassing match betwixt you and Stephen King?

Jeff Smith  
Irving, TX

*[Send certified check or money order for \$100 (nonrefundable, of course) to reserve your ringside seat, in case the big event should ever take place.]*

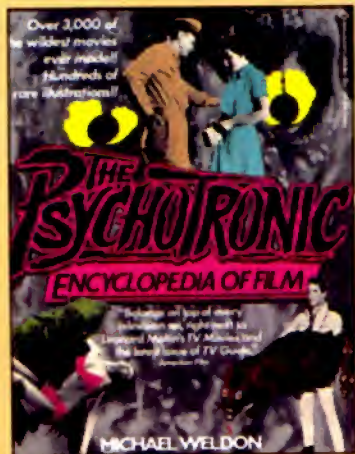


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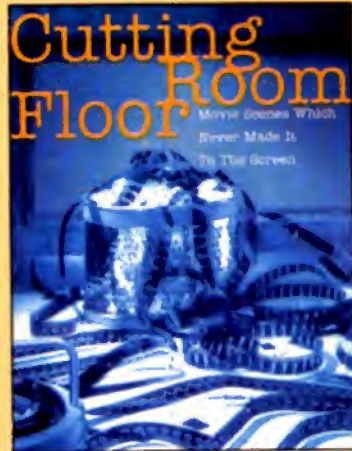
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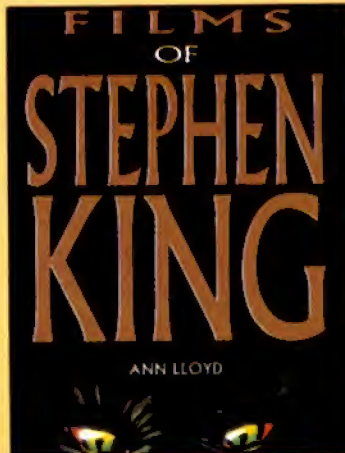
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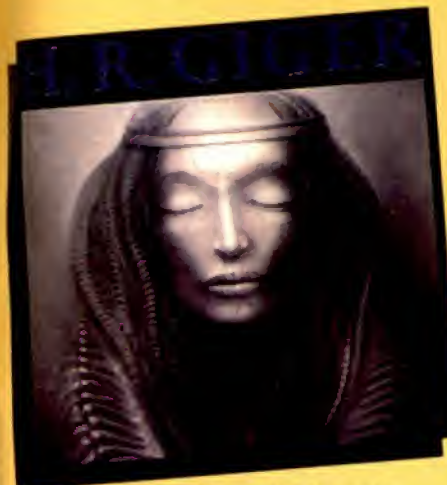
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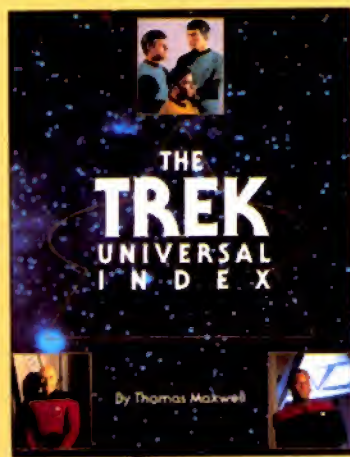
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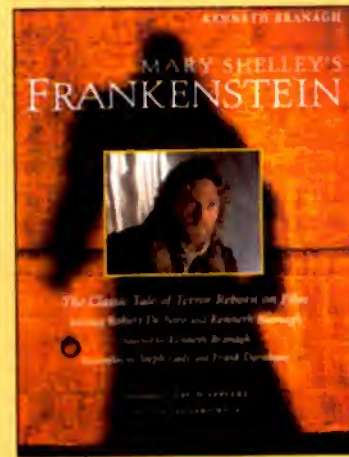
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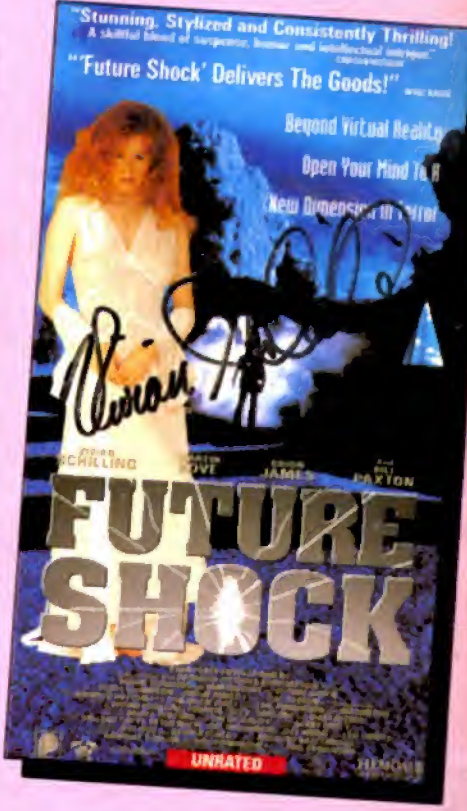
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